

**THE GERMAN RECEPTION OF ROMAIN ROLLAND
AND *JEAN-CHRISTOPHE* 1910 - 1945**

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I certify that I have composed this dissertation, and that it is the result of my own work.

Geraldine Harrison

To John, Patrick, Anna and Michael

ABSTRACT

Romain Rolland, *Jean-Christophe* and Germany have long been linked. Critics have traditionally assumed that Rolland was better received in Germany than in France, both as an artist and as a pacifist spokesman for humanity. This study attempts to give a representative picture of the critical reception Rolland and his *chef d'oeuvre Jean-Christophe* received in the German-speaking world 1910 - 1945.

His reception was not, however, unreserved and uncritical, but varied both in the degree of support for his political goals as for his artistic aims. The plurality and diversity of readings is striking, with many divergent interpretations being based upon the same textual content. Socio-political readings of the text before 1918 were commonplace with German critics attempting to understand the ideological, particularly nationalist messages of *Jean-Christophe*. Liberal humanist readings followed in the Weimar era, with critics searching for the lasting significance of the novel and the man. Weimar Rolland scholars recognised in *Jean-Christophe* the passionate need for man to address both temporal and spiritual needs. They also acknowledged Rolland's intuitive understanding of life as a process of perpetual transformation, of *Werden*.

Nevertheless, his life was generally the subject of greater praise than his work. The placing of the man before the artist was a trend which was to dominate Rolland criticism throughout the Weimar Republic and beyond. The relationship between the political dimension of Rolland's life and his standing as an artist was to present German critics just as their French counterparts with a considerable problem, which for many has not been satisfactorily resolved to this day.

Le roman ne commence, ni ne finit, pas plus que la vie. Il "devient", selon la belle expression allemande; il est en perpétuel état de transformation.

Romain Rolland

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INTRODUCTION

The French author Romain Rolland and Germany have long been linked. When in 1904 Rolland began the publication of his novel *Jean-Christophe*, there began too the stirrings of a prolonged and complex relationship. *Jean-Christophe* was destined to awaken great curiosity among a German-speaking readership, for Rolland had taken the controversial decision, at a time of considerable Franco-German tension, to make the hero of his *roman fleuve* a German. This interest was further stimulated by the role that Romain Rolland chose to assume during the First World War, the ramifications of which continued well beyond 1918.

Rolland's attitudes to Germany have been thoughtfully researched and documented. Two major studies from the 1960's made important contributions to the body of scholarship regarding this question. Marcelle Kempf's *Romain Rolland et l'Allemagne*¹ attempts to arrive at an understanding of Rolland's, at times, ambivalent feelings. The most significant contribution, however, is to be found in the work of René Cheval and his remarkable volume *Romain Rolland, l'Allemagne et la Guerre*.² The present work is indebted to the thoroughness and sensitivity with which the late M. Cheval approached the question of Rolland and Germany. Both of these studies marked an important new trend in French criticism, setting out to prove that Rolland had no special admiration for, or devotion to, Germany. In that, they stood in stark contrast to earlier trends in French criticism in which Rolland was portrayed as displaying an overriding affection, certainly for German culture, if not for Germany herself. In both instances, the main focus of these critiques hinges very much upon establishing an objective picture of Romain Rolland's perceptions of Germany. Although René Cheval does examine certain aspects of Rolland's reception by German criticism during the period 1914 -1918, his main aim is to discredit thoroughly the prevalent notion in France of Rolland, *traître à la patrie*.³

It is the other side of the critical equation which forms the basis of the present study: the reception of Romain Rolland and *Jean-Christophe* by the German-speaking world. This has been examined in partial fashion on a number of occasions. René Cheval's important contribution to the history of the German reception of the First World War years has already been acknowledged. Werner Ilberg, a critic from the former GDR, touched upon the question in his 1950 study of *Romain Rolland in seinem Verhältnis zu Deutschland und zur Sowjet-Union*⁴ as did the Swiss scholar Marc Reinhardt in his 1966 essay "Romain Rollands Verhältnis zum Deutschtum."⁵ Much more recently, Margaret Rogister examined aspects of the reception accorded to Rolland by Stefan Zweig and René Schickele for the *Modern Language Review* in 1991.⁶ There has not, however, been a systematic, chronological analysis of the image of Romain Rolland in the German-speaking world.

This is so in spite of the countless number of occasions on which the conviction has been voiced inside and outside France that Romain Rolland was better understood abroad, in particular in Germany than on home territory. Often, however, French critics were to give this assumed sympathy for the author and the novel anything other than a positive character. Le Cardonnel, critic of *Les Marges*, was not alone in suggesting in 1912 that the confusion and anarchy of the novel was certainly more likely to please a German readership than a French one.⁷ André Gide also added his influential voice to those wishing to ostracise Rolland from the French literary community and deny *Jean-Christophe* its place in French culture: "de toute notre littérature, il me semble que le livre que l'on imaginerait le plus facilement écrit en Allemagne, c'est *Jean-Christophe*, et de là sans doute son succès d'outre Rhin."⁸ After Rolland's political interventions in World War One, this antipathy on the part of nationalist critics in France, became ever more vitriolic. Gide condemned savagely both Rolland and his literary protégé Jean-Christophe after 1919:

Son livre ne paraît jamais meilleur que traduit. Je vais plus loin: il ne peut que gagner à ce que la langue française n'existe plus, ni l'art

français, ni le goût français, ni aucun de ces dons qu'il nie et qui lui sont déniés.⁹

A full account of Romain Rolland's reception in France 1898 - 1945 may be found in Ives Jeanneret's 1982 thesis , *Un demi-siècle de réception critique de l'oeuvre de Romain Rolland en France*. This important account of the critical fate of one of France's most controversial authors has served as a very useful source of reference for the present work. Jeanneret believed that a comparative study of Rolland's critical reception in France and abroad would yield interesting perspectives:

Ce serait un travail considérable et fécond de comparer cette "lecture française" à celle de l'étranger, pour dégager des concordances et des divergences, et aussi pour vérifier ou infirmer une certitude souvent avancée par les critiques français: Romain Rolland aurait été plus tôt et plus complètement compris à l'étranger qu'en France.¹⁰

It is hoped that the present work goes some of the way towards providing a basis for a possible comparative analysis.

It was not, however, simply Romain Rolland's French critics who spoke of his affinity with German culture and hence his capacity to please a German-speaking readership. It would seem that Rolland shared this belief that a sympathetic reception awaited him, (in spite of any initial reticence). He wrote to Sofia Bertolini on 14 March 1913, shortly before the publication of the first German edition of *Jean-Christophe*:

Je crois que lorsque *Jean-Christophe* sera publié en Allemagne (au printemps), il y sera mieux aimé que partout ailleurs. Je le vois par les lettres que je reçois, et par l'attachement qui témoigne à mon oeuvre mon traducteur allemand.¹¹

All the signs for a positive and sympathetic reception appeared to be present. It therefore seemed a challenging and interesting task to piece together the reality of the critical reception that Rolland received in the German-speaking world. That is the starting point of the research here undertaken, the results

of which are now presented in this study. This survey concentrates its attention on the reception of Romain Rolland by German criticism 1910-1945. Evidence of earlier criticism, including a review of Rolland's thesis dating back to 1895 and a number of reviews by Felix Vogt for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* and *Das literarische Echo*, pre-date this.¹² A convenient starting point for this analysis, however, is 1910, since it was at this time that *Jean-Christophe* began to make a more general impact in the German-speaking world. That was also the year in which Stefan Zweig made a personal pledge to Rolland to serve as propagator of his work to a German readership.¹³ The death of the author on 30 December 1944 and his burial on 2 January 1945 offer a natural cut-off point and permit the study of the full gamut of contemporaneous criticism in German.

The research for this study, whilst concentrating its attention in the main on Germany, has not excluded reviews and works which stem from beyond the geographical boundaries of German territory. This is important in order to assess Rolland's impact in the German-speaking world more generally. The author and critic Stefan Zweig, was of course Austrian. It is interesting to note, however, that Stefan Zweig was not averse to referring to himself as German. In an open letter to Romain Rolland published in 1912 in the *Berliner Tageblatt*, he thanked Rolland for *Jean-Christophe* 'as a German':

Ich finde mich selbst verwirrt, wie vielfach ich Ihnen eigentlich danken muß. Der Mensch, der Genießer, der Künstler, *der Deutsche*, der Weltfrohe in mir, jeder drängt vor und will Ihnen ein Wort sagen [...] *Heute soll nur der Deutsche danken*, denn ich habe das Gefühl, die französische Jugend ist uns näher geworden durch dieses Buch.¹⁴

This clearly demonstrates that Zweig shared a definition of 'German' which extended beyond geographical definitions. His understanding here is of Germany as a cultural entity, of *Deutschtum* rather than *Deutschland*. The political and cultural hegemony of Germany was perhaps not laid to rest until after the defeat of Hitler's Third Reich in 1945. Therefore, not in any way wishing to undermine or offend national sensibilities, in particular the wholly legitimate claims to independence of the smaller nation states, it is this

broader definition of 'German' as a cultural concept which has determined the use of the word in the present study. As we shall see later, the ambiguity with which Romain Rolland himself used the terms 'German' and 'Germany' was to be at the heart of much critical controversy among German-speakers..

When in February 1935, the doctoral candidate Karl Großhans wrote to Romain Rolland to inform him of his intention to 'demonstrate' the underlying Germanic qualities of the Frenchman's work, he provoked a sharp rebuke. Rolland was naturally offended and angered by the attempts to impose a "racist"¹⁵ reading upon his life and his art. He complained most bitterly, however, at the lack of objectivity with which Großhans had approached his subject matter. The resulting shameless manipulation of the material to fit into a preconceived programme, in this case the need to provide fascist interpretations of essentially humanist ideas, could lay no claim to scientific analysis. For Rolland, the only sound basis upon which to build a scholarly work of substance was long and patient observation, in which interpretation came as the culmination, not the commencement of the process: "La seule marche de l'esprit, qui soit loyale et scientifique, est d'observer d'abord les faits, de les réunir, de les étudier sans parti-pris, et puis après, de les classer".¹⁶ The present study too has taken as its methodological foundation that desire to proceed empirically, to observe, study and then attempt to classify. Needless to say, it no doubt falls far short of its goal of objectivity on many occasions. Is it not necessary, however, in spite of the impossibility of fulfilling this ideal, to seek to maintain the integrity and essential truth of our work as critics?

This is, hence, a work which has, broadly speaking, allowed the critics studied to set the ideological and theoretical agenda. It proceeds chronologically, being divided into the following historical sections: pre-1914, First World War, Weimar, post-1933. The focus of attention necessarily changes with the historical, political and literary traditions and influences of the day. Consequently, the results of the research here undertaken often tell us more about the predominant literary thinking or political allegiances of a critic and the society in which he lived than about

the work upon which he is commenting. It is a study which does not attempt to give a new interpretation of either Romain Rolland or *Jean-Christophe*, but one which hopes to offer a perspective upon literary critical thought in the German-speaking world in the first half of this century. It is an approach which has no desire to supersede other critical approaches, but rather to complement the body of scholarship already in existence and to stimulate in its own small way new debate. As the Rolland scholar Bernard Duchâtelet points out in his study of the origins of *Jean-Christophe*, it is the imposition of dogmatic methodological or theoretical criteria which threaten to rob criticism of its richness: "Loin de s'exclure, les diverses approches critiques d'une oeuvre se complètent. Aucune ne suffit à elle-même. Leur tort serait de se vouloir totalisantes."¹⁷

The examination of the critical reception of the novel *Jean-Christophe* in Germany forms the basis of this thesis. It is widely regarded as Rolland's *chef d'oeuvre* and it made a natural choice since its subject matter appealed so readily to a German-speaking readership, telling the story of a German musical genius who makes his home in Paris. It very quickly became clear, however, that it would be impossible to separate the image of the author from the reception of his novel. The very special way in which the artist and his creation became so inextricably interlinked is discussed in the coming chapters. It was therefore neither possible nor desirable to exclude from this discussion some of Romain Rolland's political writings which relate to Germany and which influenced his reception in such vital fashion. In order to maintain a homogeneity in the debate, however, references to other creative writings by Romain Rolland have been limited. Where such references are made, they are designed largely to underline a point.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the body of research which underpins this thesis is as full as possible, it is doubtless not exhaustive. Initial research was guided by the comprehensive bibliographies of William Thomas Starr and the Russian Rolland scholars Vaksmakhev, Paievskaya and Galperina. Further to this, a concerted attempt was made to carry out a systematic analysis of bibliographies and cataloguing systems of the

Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz and the library of the *Freie Universität* (in the former West Berlin), the *Akademie der Künste der DDR* and the library facilities of the *Humboldt Universität* (in the former East Berlin). The *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach and the *Bayerische Staatsbibliothek* in Munich proved to be invaluable sources of information, together with the *Theatermuseum* again in Munich and the *Institut für Zeitungsforschung* in Dortmund. The *Deutsche Bibliothek* and the *Exilarchiv* in Frankfurt were also important reference points. Research was carried out at the Romain Rolland archive, the *Fonds Romain Rolland*, located at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris and directed by Professor Bernard Duchâtelet. It is clear from the correspondence available at the archive that Romain Rolland's links with German speakers were very considerable indeed.¹⁸ Reference to this is made, on occasion, in the present study. It is, however, limited and there is ample scope for further research.

Although, it is believed, all major studies on Romain Rolland to appear in German before 1945 and indeed beyond that date, have been included, it would be impossible to make similar claims for articles and reviews from newspapers and periodicals. Every effort has been made, however, to ensure a spread of opinion, across the political and literary spectrum. Whilst it is not possible to categorise all journals, some do serve as the organ of a particular community or of a particular cause. *Der Gral* and *Hochland* were, for example, Catholic journals; *Die christliche Welt* addressed the Protestant community, *Jeschurun*, and the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, the Jewish. *Die schöne Literatur* and the *Deutsche Rundschau* were of rather conservative and anti-internationalist persuasion; *Die neue Bücherschau* and *Das Forum* of distinctly left-wing character. Fritz Schlawe's reference manual, *Literarische Zeitschriften*,¹⁹ has given very valuable guidance here. Efforts were made to scan as many of the most influential periodicals of the day. It is therefore believed that the results of this research have representative value.

In his thesis Ives Jeanneret points to the complexity of critical discourse in France. In his time, Romain Rolland was consecrated by such diverse groups

as avant-garde journals, the *Académie Française*, nationalists, pacifists, socialists and communists.²⁰ We shall see that the reception across the Rhine was, throughout a turbulent period of German history, equally complex. Jeanneret also points, however, to Rolland's brutal fall from grace in France since the peak of his success in 1913, his fictional writing having gradually been relegated to the ranks of minor French authors. Indeed, it is perfectly possible to pass the *agrégation* and thus become a teacher of French letters, almost wholly ignorant of the work of this man who had once been awarded the *Grand Prix de la Littérature de l'Académie Française*, the year in which, Jeanneret reminds us, Marcel Proust's *Du côté de chez Swann* first appeared:

Pourtant aujourd'hui il figure au second ou au troisième plan des Histoires Littéraires, il est peu représenté dans les manuels scolaires, peu étudié à l'Université. On entend dire que son style a vieilli, qu'il est devenu illisible, que c'est de la littérature pour adolescents. On oublie ses idées autant que son style. On peut tout à fait obtenir l'agrégation dans des lettres en ignorant à peu près tout de ses oeuvres.²¹

Ives Jeanneret contrasts this reception at home to the belief that Romain Rolland remains a cherished author and important literary figure outside France: "Cette consécration spectaculaire et cet oubli brutal seraient à eux seuls un sujet d'interrogation, surtout quand on sait que l'oeuvre de Romain Rolland reste l'une des plus appréciées à l'étranger."²² The present work will endeavour to test this belief with regard to the German-speaking world by establishing a representative picture of the critical reception Rolland was to receive in his life-time. It hopes too that this may provide important pointers to an understanding of his political and literary fate there after 1945.

Notes

- 1 Kempf, Marcelle: *Romain Rolland et l'Allemagne*. Nouvelles Editions Debresse, Paris 1962.
- 2 Cheval, René: *Rolland, l'Allemagne et le Guerre*. Presses universitaires de France, Paris 1963.
- 3 Duchâtelet, Bernard: "Rolland". In: *Dictionnaire des littératures de langue française*. Bordas, Paris 1984, p 1958.
- 4 Ilberg, Werner: *Traum und Tat - Romain Rolland in seinem Verhältnis zu Deutschland und zur Sowjet-Union*. Mitteldeutscher Verlag, Halle 1950.
- 5 Reinhardt, Marc: "Rollands Verhältnis zum Deutschtum." In: *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*, vol XVI, 1966, pp 138-160.
- 6 Rogister, Margaret: "Romain Rolland: One German View." In: *The Modern Language Review*, vol LXXXVI, part 2, April 1991, pp 349-360.
- 7 Le Cardonnell, G: "Ein jungfranzösischer Roman." In: *Pan*, vol II, no 14, 22 February 1912, pp 410-414. This is a translation of an article which appeared originally in the Paris journal *Les Marges*, January 1912. It is discussed in greater detail in Chapter One.
- 8 Gide, André: *Incidences*, p 19. Quoted after Reinhardt (see note 4 above), p 140.
- 9 Gide, André: "Romain Rolland." In: *La nouvelle Revue française*, 1 July 1919. Quoted after Massis, Henri: *Jugements*. Plon-Nourrit, Paris 1923, p 137.
- 10 Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle de réception critique de l'oeuvre de Romain Rolland en France 1898 - 1945*. Unpublished dissertation, Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, Paris III, 1983. (Hereafter referred to as *Un demi-siècle*).

- 11 *Cahiers Romain Rolland* No 11. *Chère Sofia*. Choix de lettres de Romain Rolland à Sofia Bertolini Guerrieri-Gonzaga, vol II (1909 - 1932). Editions Albin Michel, Paris 1959, p 172.
- 12 See bibliography.
- 13 Unpublished letter. Fonds Romain Rolland held at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, (hereafter referred to as FRR).
- 14 Zweig, Stefan: "Brief an Romain Rolland." In: *Berliner Tageblatt*, vol XLI, 22 December 1912. My emphasis.
- 15 This term was used by Romain Rolland himself in a letter to Großhans of 28 February 1935. Quoted by Großhans, Karl: *Romain Rolland und der germanische Geist*. Konrad Trilitsch, Würzburg 1937, p 3: "[...] et je suis fâché qu'un jeune étudiant allemand intelligent, comme vous êtes, se laisse prendre à ces mots d'ordre 'racistes', qui sont une duperie dans un Occident aussi mêlé et malaxé depuis des siècles, et qui, en ce qui concerne mon propre cas, sont une complète erreur scientifique."
- 16 Ibid, p 4.
- 17 Duchâtelet, Bernard: *La genèse de Jean-Christophe de Romain Rolland*. Bibliothèque des lettres modernes, vol XXVIII. Minard, Paris 1978, p 7.
- 18 Some interesting indications of this wealth of material are also to be found in the catalogue produced for the Rolland exhibition in Germany 1967 - 1968: *Romain Rolland - Weltbürger zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland*. Wanderausstellung 1967 - 1968. Süddeutscher Verlag, Munich 1967.
- 19 Schlawe, Fritz: *Literarische Zeitschriften*, Teil II (1910 - 1933), Metzler, Stuttgart 1962.
- 20 *Un demi-siècle*, p 12.

21 Ibid, pp 12-13.

22 Ibid, p 13.

1910 - 1914

Chapter I

ROMAIN ROLLAND AND PRE-1914 GERMANY

The last tenuous years of peace in Europe which preceded the blood bath of 1914 saw the awakening of considerable interest within the German-speaking world for the French novelist and playwright, Romain Rolland. Critics concerned themselves almost exclusively, in this pre-1914 period, with Romain Rolland's *roman fleuve*, *Jean-Christophe*. The present chapter will therefore concentrate largely on this initial reception of the novel and the artist, and will attempt to analyse the way in which not only the novel but also the fierce literary debate surrounding *Jean-Christophe* was translated from a French into a German context. It is a discussion which will set important parameters for the critical debate on Rolland's work which was to take place in Germany after 1914.

Romain Rolland's reputation as a writer had been relatively slow to establish itself both at home and in Germany,¹ though it is true that he achieved some renown as an historian of music. As a writer of fictional material however, and here we must remember that *Jean-Christophe* began to appear in 1904, he was still not widely known in 1910. Hermann Bahr's enquiries about Rolland at that date in Paris were greeted with utter consternation and he was told quite simply that no author of that name existed: "Nein, es gibt keinen Dichter Rolland. Es gibt einen Rolland, aber der ist Musikkritiker."² There are a number of reasons for this initial lack of critical attention. Perhaps we might suggest some of them.

Romain Rolland's novel has a rather curious pedigree. The idea for the novel came to him in the Spring of 1890 in Rome.³ In a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug of 5 November 1896, he informed his friend that he was writing

a "roman très long, qui me prendra sans doute plusieurs années à faire."⁴ Quite how many years must have surprised even the author himself, for the gestation period of the novel spanned twenty-two years, the first volume of *Jean-Christophe* appearing in 1904, the tenth and final in 1912. The novel was first serialised in Charles Péguy's *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, a literary and political journal of the French avant-garde. Although readership of the *Cahiers* was extremely loyal, circulation was limited and publication haphazard. It was for this reason that Romain Rolland chose to publish a second edition of *Jean Christophe* with Ollendorf in Paris, this *Edition complète* (1905-1912) inevitably leading to many tensions between the author and his two publishers.

Romain Rolland's ability to reach an audience in Germany was seriously curtailed by the fact that a translation of *Jean-Christophe* was not available until the Spring of 1914, although some extracts did appear earlier in German newspapers and journals. The *Berliner Tageblatt*, for example, printed lengthy passages from *La Foire sur la place* and *Dans la maison* in early 1911.⁵ Rolland had always been very keen to see his work translated into German even though he realised that the criticisms of Germany contained in *Jean Christophe* might initially offend, Rolland felt that the novel would provoke genuine affection among a German readership:

Je crois que lorsque *Jean Christophe* sera publié en Allemagne (au printemps), il y sera mieux aimé que partout ailleurs. Je le vois par les lettres que je reçois, et par l'attachement qui témoigne à mon oeuvre mon traducteur allemand.⁶

Letters such as those from Hermann Bahr must have confirmed Rolland in this belief. Bahr wrote to express his admiration in early 1909, describing *Jean Christophe* as "l'oeuvre la plus allemande qui existe de notre temps, plus profondément allemande que toutes les oeuvres de l'Allemagne actuelle."⁷ Let us simply note here that Bahr immediately established a concept of 'German' which stood in contrast to the contemporary reality of 'Germany'. It is surprising therefore, that this "most German of

contemporary German works" was not seized upon more quickly by a German publishing house.

From Romain Rolland's correspondence it is possible to see, however, that a series of problems beset the author and those who would have liked to see his work in German translation. It would seem that Rolland had in fact planned an early German translation of *Jean-Christophe* and had granted Hélène Barrère, daughter of the French ambassador to Rome, permission to translate the first volume in 1905.⁸ By June 1906 Mlle Barrère had completed this task and Rolland thus felt it proper to refuse Elsa Wolff, an aspiring Berlin authoress, rights of translation at that date.⁹ It would appear, however, that relations became strained between the author and Mlle Barrère, probably due to an unsolicited passion that the translator developed for Rolland.¹⁰ In any event, Hélène Barrère's translation was never to appear.

These unfortunate circumstances delayed matters considerably. It was to be Paul Stefan and Stefan Zweig who later pressed Romain Rolland and Rütten and Loening for publication of a German version. Stefan Zweig first became acquainted with the work in 1908 and was riveted by what he read.¹¹ Such was his enthusiasm for this chance discovery that he felt moved to make a pledge to Romain Rolland in a letter dated 12 February 1910:

Nous sommes en Allemagne maintenant un cercle (encore restreint) des hommes qui vous aiment bien, qui font des efforts chez les éditeurs pour avoir le "Jean Christophe" entier en allemand [...]. Le public allemand ne sait encore rien (ou peu) de votre oeuvre, mais nous nous chargerons de faire l'intermédiaire.¹²

An attempt to come to an arrangement with Ollendorf in 1910 came to nothing.¹³ It is clear from correspondence of the period that Stefan Zweig in particular took great pains with Rolland's affairs. He served as an intermediary with Rütten and Loening, advising upon the choice of translator and accepting "toute la responsabilité morale, que l'édition allemande soit digne de votre chef d'oeuvre."¹⁴ By the end of 1912, Stefan Zweig had wrought a promise from the Frankfurt publisher to produce not only a

complete edition of Rolland's dramas, but also a commitment to publish all future works by the Frenchman.¹⁵ Otto and Erna Grautoff were eventually chosen as translators of *Jean-Christophe* and volumes I - IV appeared in the spring of 1914. Fatefully, the outbreak of war interrupted publication however, and the remaining volumes were not released until 1917. We shall later have cause to examine the consequences of that delay.

Many French critics, it would seem, felt uncomfortable with the novel from a very early stage. Major Parisian journals did not start to review *Jean-Christophe* until 1909, and Romain Rolland's critical breakthrough in France came three years after that, in 1912.¹⁶ Yet, in spite of this silence in the press, the novel was a tremendous success with the public and had already gained a minor prize in 1905 from a woman's weekly journal, the *Vie Heureuse*. Rolland comments on this curious phenomenon in a letter to a friend, dated 12 April 1908: "une solitude presque absolue dans le Tout-Paris de la littérature, et un public fidèle et assez étendu."¹⁷ Although this latest volume, *La Foire sur la place*, had not received a single recommendation from the French critical establishment, it enjoyed a great deal of popularity with the ordinary reader: "il n'y a pas eu en France un seul article de journal, ni de revue; et malgré cela, on en a fait 10 éditions."¹⁸ One could argue that it was Rolland's popularity which eventually forced Parisian critics to address the work. Even when critical recognition finally came in 1913 with the granting of one of France's most prestigious literary prizes, the *Grand Prix de la Littérature Française*, the praise remained rather reluctant and half-hearted.¹⁹ Rolland had always sensed that he would never be truly accepted or appreciated by the Parisian intelligentsia. He confessed in a letter to Sofia Bertolini of 2 November 1908:

Je sais que jamais ces gens ne me comprendront, même s'ils finissent par me louer [...] le cercle immédiat d'intellectuels parisiens m'est étranger, et ennemi, en secret.²⁰

By committing to paper in *Jean Christophe* his passionate criticisms of the French establishment, Romain Rolland was wholly aware that he was making

enemies. That enmity was partly personal, partly ideological. Some of the characters in *La Foire sur la place*, for example, were felt to resemble real life individuals so accurately that the offended parties considered lodging complaints with the *Société des gens de lettres*.²¹ More importantly, however, this ill-will arose out of the transgression of national and artistic sensibilities.

Romain Rolland sensed that *Jean-Christophe* might cause offence in both France and Germany: "La France et l'Allemagne seront les dernières à en parler. Cela blesse beaucoup de susceptibilités nationales, et cela déconcerte les artistes: cela est en dehors de la tradition littéraire."²² National and formal questions did indeed dominate the early debate on the novel in France and Germany alike. Critics on opposing sides of the Rhine, however, tended to give this debate quite different complexions. A review of Rolland's status in France will permit us to establish an important backdrop to his literary reception across the Rhine. It will also enable us to enter into a comparative analysis of the impact *Jean-Christophe* was to have before the Great War.

As Rolland had suspected, the debate on *Jean-Christophe* was to be dominated in France by both the nationalist issues raised in the novel and the challenge it presented to accepted literary tradition. Curiously, protagonists and detractors alike fought their battles for and against *Jean-Christophe* on essentially similar ground. The protagonists were found largely, though not exclusively,²³ among the young French avant-garde who praised Rolland for his defiance of social and literary convention. Detractors, often traditionalist and conservative, found Rolland's decision to create a German hero distasteful if not disgraceful, and his writing mediocre. Was Rolland an innovative spirit or mediocre artist? A courageous internationalist or quite simply unpatriotic? These were the opinions voiced vociferously by both camps, for *Jean-Christophe* rarely provoked a non-partisan approach.

Le Cardonnell, a reviewer for *Les Marges*, was given the opportunity of publishing his views on Romain Rolland to a German readership in February 1912. In an article which appeared in *Pan*,²⁴ the critic placed himself without

hesitation in the camp of Rolland's detractors. Le Cardonnel gave his reader an ironic introduction to what he termed the sanctities of the hour. These transitory sacred cows were Paul Claudel, André Gide and Romain Rolland. All three, Le Cardonnel noted, had an extremely loyal following, provoking a quasi-religious fervour in the young men and women who admired them. Le Cardonnel's portrait of Rolland was particularly comical and unkind:

Und schließlich haben wir das Heiligtum Romain Rolland. Hier treibt man Laienkult; die hochgestimmte Seele seufzt ohne Unterlaß über die Traurigkeiten der Zeit. Und manchmal wird sogar auch die Orgel gespielt.²⁵

Le Cardonnel attributed cult status to Rolland. He was the lay preacher, ceaselessly sighing about the aimlessness of the world. The organ here is probably a reference to Romain Rolland's activities as professor of history of music, when he would illustrate his lectures for his large audience of enraptured students by playing at the piano.

Popular though it was, it was alleged that *Jean-Christophe* would not survive the test of time, at least not in France. For, the critic argued, the work ran contrary to the essential tenets of literary and philosophical tradition in France: it simply was not French. *Jean-Christophe* must be regarded as a document, said Le Cardonnel, not a novel, valuable principally as a socio-political commentary on contemporary French life and letters. He admitted that it was an effective mirror of the dreadful pessimism and confusion of the age, bearing witness to the decay of the French nation, with its endless and divisive debates on anti-semitism, the role of the Jews, love, women, anarchy and pacifism. Such debates had indeed taken place in French public life, the most celebrated of which were provoked by the Dreyfus affair.

However, *Jean-Christophe* not only portrayed chaos, Le Cardonnel contended, the novel was in itself chaotic and that was an unforgivable failing in French art:

Man könnte sagen, daß die künstlerische Wirrnis darin ihr Recht habe, da sie die Verworrenheit ihrer Zeit abspiegelt. Aber ich könnte freilich darauf erwidern, daß es das Französische in der Kunst sei, auch die schlimmste Verwirrung nach Maß und Ordnung zu gestalten.²⁶

Le Cardonnel concluded that *Jean-Christophe* may indeed have been a relative correlative of its time, but that was not enough to make it a work of art. Its lack of order and confusion of form condemned it to the ranks of lesser French literature. Literary history would seem to have proved Le Cardonnel right, at least in France.

Our critic believed that *Jean-Christophe* was just the type of French literature that foreigners liked, because it was not really French at all. The novel was confused and anarchic, and Le Cardonnel rather discourteously suggested to his German readership that it was on the "strength" of these literary errors that Rolland's popularity abroad rested. Since foreign readers did not understand or appreciate truly French literature, Le Cardonnel said, they seized upon the work of lesser French artists because it was closer to their own flawed traditions:

Begreiflich, daß ein solches Buch enthusiastische Freunde unter den zahlreichen Nichtfranzosen findet; die beteuern gern ihre Bewunderung vor jedem Werk der französischen Sprache, das die Fehler ihrer eigenen Schriftsteller hat und die Vorzüge jener französischen Kultur vermissen läßt, die wir verlangen.²⁷

The underlying cultural arrogance of such a statement now appears surprising. Its basic tenet was one to be repeated many times, however, by other French critics.²⁸ The charges, as set out in Le Cardonnel's article, would doubtless have served to endear Rolland to a German audience. Far from alienating potential readers from Rolland's work, the antagonism of the French establishment awakened considerable interest and sympathy in Germany as we shall see later in this chapter.

The French critic and friend of Rolland, Henri Guilbeaux, provided a very much more enthusiastic introduction to *Jean-Christophe* than Le Cardonnel in the pages of *Das literarische Echo* in December 1912. Guilbeaux did not hesitate to underline the abyss which separated Rolland from his traditionalist critics in France. Indeed, he consciously used this hostility to endear the German reader to Rolland. He acknowledged that Romain Rolland's work did not easily fit into recognised literary categories. Was *Jean-Christophe* a novel, or a poem? Little did it matter, Guilbeaux exclaimed, for it was a true work of art, an epic.

Yet, although Le Cardonnel and Henri Guilbeaux stood poles apart, they both seemed to agree that Romain Rolland was no literary craftsman. This consensus was arrived at, as Ives Jeanneret effectively demonstrated in his work on the reception of Romain Rolland in France, by Rolland's literary friends and foes alike.²⁹ Whilst his 'lack of artistry' was so serious a fault to his detractors that it effectively banished him from the ranks of great French literature, Rolland's admirers were defiant. Absence of style, they said, was one of Rolland's greatest qualities, since this contempt for style was, in their view, the mark of a true artist.

Style became the watchword of both camps, and it was often used rather indiscriminately. In his discussion of style in the French novel, Stephen Ullmann indicates that there are essentially two schools of thought in this regard. According to the first tradition, in which he includes Gustave Flaubert and Marcel Proust, style is an inimitable hallmark of a great artist. It is yet more since it encapsulates in an absolute fashion the artist's perception of the world: "Le style," wrote Flaubert, "est à lui tout seul une manière absolue de voir les choses."³⁰ This view accords style the highest of functions in the creative process. According to the second school of thought, to which Rolland doubtless belonged, style is more of a means to an end than an end in itself. It is regarded as a means of formulating thought with a maximum of effectiveness. No-one could deny the individuality of Rolland's writing; his use of vocabulary and sentence structure were very distinctive. Yet an overwhelming majority of Rolland's admirers chose not to defend

either his literary style or his undoubted artistry with words. Rolland, Guilbeaux wrote, was: "Unbekümmert darum, einen 'Stil' zu schaffen, und voll Verachtung gegen die Technik der Schriftstellerei;"³¹ and later, "er gibt allen Worten die gleiche Ehre."³² Our French critic did in fact correct this rather simplistic view in a later article.³³ However, Guilbeaux' chief concern was not to defend Rolland as a writer but as an artist. His aim and that of many of the young radicals was to bring about a fundamental shift of emphasis in French literature: away from an obsession with the external manifestations of beauty to the inner life of the soul.

Style was the domain of those who espoused the maxim of *l'art pour l'art* aestheticism, of those who had turned literature into an empty shell, destined to be enjoyed by a bored and over-privileged elite. Thus, for members of the French avant-garde such as Henri Guilbeaux, the concept of style assumed an intensely emotional dimension. The creators of style, the *litterati*, were seen to be so obsessed with beauty of form that they betrayed the essence of art. Proof of intellectual and emotional honesty was to be found in a rejection of all the external baubles of literary style. Romain Rolland effectively proved his worth as a writer and a man to his fervent young French admirers by turning his back on France's traditional obsession with beauty. Yet that which constituted proof of integrity to one camp was taken as evidence of mediocrity by the other.

The avant-garde, which saw Romain Rolland as one of its foremost representatives, sought to create an art for and of the people, an art in which form did not dominate content. Thus Guilbeaux and others did not hesitate to emphasise, and with hindsight one might even say exaggerate, Rolland's supposed lack of concern for the craft of writing. In so doing, they also gave validity to some of the conclusions of Rolland's literary enemies.³⁴ Indeed, one could argue that these admirers were misguided in their defence of Rolland. For in denying Rolland style and in asserting his antagonism to all matter of form, they undoubtedly contributed to the decline of Rolland's literary reputation and his relative neglect in latter day France. Ives Jeanneret regretted that Rolland's supporters had done so little to prevent that

rather shallow statement being entered into the annals of French literary history: "Romain Rolland n'a pas de style".³⁵ The consequences of that, he argued, are still felt in modern-day France.

However, a lack of clarity of form and style were not Romain Rolland's only failings, for he was also guilty too of 'betraying' French tradition on one other important account. In the penultimate volume of *Jean-Christophe, Le Buisson ardent*, Le Cardonnell believed that Rolland made reason subservient to emotion. As such the author was seen to fly in the face of his cultural inheritance. Was not the triumph of emotion over reason the fare of German Romanticism, the French critic asked?:

Welch ein Irrtum von Christophe, zu glauben, daß er ein lebendiges Werk schaffen werde, wenn sein Verstand sich der Leidenschaft unterwirft! Als ob in der Kunst der Geist nicht ebensoviel zu sagen hätte wie das Gefühl. Dieser Cristophe [sic], scheint mir, ist zu deutsch.³⁶

The irony of the final statement would seem to have escaped its author. After all, was not Jean-Christophe supposed to be German? Yet the charge was really one against Rolland for having succeeded in creating 'too German' a character. That was doubtless enough to condemn Rolland in the eyes of many in France as, after the second Moroccan Crisis of 1911, Franco-German relations entered a renewed period of tension. From a German perspective, however, one Frenchman accusing another of bowing to German tradition must have appeared an intriguing phenomenon.

If some of Romain Rolland's enemies called into question the author's loyalty to his heritage, certain 'admirers' went so far as to deny it altogether. Henri Guilbeaux told the readers of *Das literarische Echo* in 1912 that Rolland's own heroes and role models did not come from his native France at all, but from non-Latin countries and in particular from Germany. In decided preference to the "kalten, steifen französischen Klassikern,"³⁷ Romain Rolland's dearest cultural ancestors were Beethoven, Bach, Händel, Mozart, Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Walt Whitman, Guilbeaux informed us:

So wie er ist, ist er der Antipode der romanischen Positivisten, und sein Temperament, geweckt von den großen nordischen Künstlern, hat keinerlei Verwandtschaft mit dem lateinischen Element.³⁸

This was doubtless far too simplistic an assessment of Romain Rolland, the man and the artist, who loved France and French tradition with energy and pride. Rolland expressed his dissatisfaction and anger at this critical tendency to strip him of his national and cultural identity and to deny the profound attachment he felt to France and to her literary and philosophical traditions. He felt that too many critics, of all nationalities, sought to sever him from his roots and he deeply resented this. To those who described him as 'German', he had the following to say:

Je ne suis nullement imprégné d'idées allemandes. Je le lis assez mal. Philosophiquement, ma culture est toute cartésienne (et hellénique) [...]. C'est par les musiciens allemands, uniquement, que j'ai pénétré (à ma façon) l'âme allemande.³⁹

One could argue that statements such as Guilbeaux' did as much to damage Rolland's reputation in France as the attacks by his literary foes, since information emanating from sympathetic sources is often assumed to echo the beliefs of the writer himself.

Nevertheless, Romain Rolland was forced to admit his sense of isolation in pre-war Paris: "Moi qui me sais vieux Français, fidèle au génie de ma race," he wrote to Sofia Bertolini, "je suis comme un étranger au milieu de ces Français dégénérés."⁴⁰ Rolland vigorously refuted, however, that to be out of step with the definition of 'French' as espoused by the literary establishment of the day meant that an artist had foreign allegiances. In his opinion it reflected the inadequacy of that definition. Yet he was also forced to conclude that French literature in general had traditionally offered only a poor reflection of the life of the nation and its people:

[...] ce qu'il en faut conclure, c'est que la littérature française actuelle (et même passée) donne une idée fort incomplète de la France, et que les bonnes gens de France ont beaucoup plus de ressemblances avec les bonnes gens d'Allemagne et des autres pays qu'on ne le dit, à l'ordinaire.⁴¹

Given the political and diplomatic climate of the day, it is not surprising that certain French critics disliked expressions of affinity with Germany.

Intolerance was the mark of the times, when not to be anti-German meant that one was effectively anti-French. Nationalistic judgements of Rolland's work were, of course, later to be voiced to the point of hysteria in France, and interestingly, in Germany alike, as the world embraced the war to end all wars.

Romain Rolland was thus seen by his detractors, of whom G. Le Cardonnell was a typical example, to be lacking not only in literary talent, but also in a love for his country and its traditions. Admirers such as Henri Guilbeaux, whose purpose it might have been to defend Rolland against these accusations, often unwittingly confirmed them. Yet the very factors which appeared to bode ill for Rolland's long-term reception in France, pointed to likely success in Germany. In this respect, *Jean-Christophe* enjoyed the unqualified recommendations of both Le Cardonnell and Guilbeaux.

It is thus surprising to discover that this was not an opinion shared by our third French critic. Ernest Seillière, whose review appeared in the *Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft* in April 1912,⁴² admitted that he found the task of introducing *Jean-Christophe* to a German readership a rather uncomfortable one. Indeed, Seillière had difficulty in recommending the novel to the German reader at all. He felt that the work contained many passages which were likely to offend deeply German national sensibilities, and he warned of the uncompromising attacks to be found in the pages of *Jean-Christophe*, attacks not only on the mentality of the ordinary German, but also on Germany's greatest sons:

Allerdings, das müssen wir zugeben, ist es eine recht heikle Sache, gerade deutschen Lesern die Lektüre von *Jean-Christophe* zu empfehlen, denn in den ersten vier Bänden des Werkes werden sie an einer oft recht scharfen Kritik der durchschnittlichen deutschen Geistesart, ja selbst der großen Männer germanischen Blutes Anstoß nehmen.⁴³

Seillière went so far as to suggest that the German reader who feared for his blood pressure might be well advised to commence the work at volume V. It is in this volume, *La Foire sur la place*, that Rolland allowed Jean-Christophe to take Parisian society to task for its superficiality, its greed, corruption and licentiousness. Ernest Seillière felt that a knowledge of just how savagely Rolland treated his fellow countrymen and women would help to minimise feelings of resentment awakened by the attacks on Germany which abounded in volumes I to IV.

It hardly takes a particularly discerning reading of *Jean-Christophe* to realise that Romain Rolland had many bones to pick with Germany. Yet Ernest Seillière was one of the very first critics to recognise the potentially negative impact of *Jean-Christophe* upon a German readership. As we shall see later in this chapter, German critics of this pre-1914 period themselves chose either to understate or quite simply ignore criticisms levelled at their country in *Jean-Christophe*. When a closer examination of Rolland's portrayal of Germany was later undertaken, there were many who did not like what they found.

Yet in those early days, *Jean-Christophe* was greeted with much enthusiasm and a great deal of surprise in Germany. As expected, Rolland was immediately seized upon as an atypical literary and moral product of his country. He was considered alien to France on two counts. Firstly, the central concerns of *Jean Christophe* seemed to run contrary to the preoccupations of his literary forerunners in general and of his contemporaries in particular; secondly, German reviewers agreed with their French counterparts, in placing Rolland stylistically and formally outside the traditions of French writing. Whilst many of Rolland's critics at home had

found this difficult to tolerate let alone approve, colleagues across the Rhine were anxious to welcome this new writer.

Romain Rolland was of course not received in a vacuum. He was compared and most of all contrasted with popular images of France and French literature. Two concepts had traditionally dominated Germany's view pre-1914, those of decadence and frivolity.⁴⁴ French art was considered decadent because, it was believed, aestheticism had led to the dominance of ornamentation: decoration without substance. Frivolity, meanwhile, was a charge prompted by what was perceived to be an excessive preoccupation with sexual love. This is a view which does of course pre- and post-date the present period under discussion, enjoying particular popularity during the First and Second World Wars and we shall later have occasion to examine the vehemence it attained.

The Catholic journal, *Der Gral* published a series of articles in 1910 entitled "Das junge Frankreich" which give us a very good feel for the general status of French art in Germany in the pre-war era. They are the work of one Dr Lorenz Krapp and they provide a particularly interesting backdrop to Romain Rolland's entry onto the German critical scene. Dr Krapp aimed to present a contemporary portrait of French literature to a German readership. The German philologist's subjects were to be Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Laforgue, de Régnier, Rodenbach, Maeterlinck and Verhaeren. It is clear from this selection that Lorenz Krapp was in fact only partly dealing with truly contemporary figures. Baudelaire had died 40 years before publication of this article, whilst Rimbaud ceased to write in the early 1870's. The Bamberg philologist was certainly guilty of manipulating his sources, for he was concerned to prove an ideological point: that of the decadence of French literature and ultimately of the French nation itself.

According to Krapp, stagnation and moral depravity marked the literature of young France. He felt that acquainting oneself with these major French poets was rather like paying a visit to a hospital ward or an asylum, with physical and mental sickness everywhere:

Das ist die Galerie der Dichter, die seit einem Menschenalter an der Spitze der französischen schönen Literatur stehen. Es ist wie ein Gang durch ein Hospital oder ein Irrenhaus. Kein einziger dieser Menschen ist gesund, frisch, kräftig. Trunkenheit und Irrsinn bei den einen - haltloses Schwanken des Geistes bei den anderen ist ihr Merkmal.⁴⁵

The symptoms of disease were identified as: moral weakness, a predominant sense of hopelessness, a celebration of decay, a lack of religious belief and the total absence of a love for France, her people and traditions.

Sophistication and artifice were the watchwords of these Parisian *café artistes*, with their Russian cigarettes and their taste for absinthe. Particularly indicative of the *malaise* was the absence of portraits of France and French life among the predominantly exotic landscapes of this poetry, with its visions of Egyptian and Babylonian antiquity and evocations of strange customs and rituals. This omission pointed, in Dr Krapp's eyes, to a lack of closeness between the artist and the people and was identified as one of the most serious failings of contemporary French art. For, he believed, a poet must seek to pay homage to the great qualities of ordinary people, honouring their spirit of sacrifice, loyalty, industriousness and faith. Krapp upheld an essentially didactic function of literature as a source of moral inspiration and strength and, in his view, the French poets had forsaken their people by indulging in a solipsistic search for beauty of form:

Talent, Talent! Ja, das haben sie alle. Wunderbare Formgewandtheit ist den meisten eigen, und ihre Verse gleichen schimmernden, blitzenden Muranesergläsern [...]. Aber ihr Volk braucht etwas anderes. Es braucht Brot - Gesundheit, Reinheit, Glauben.⁴⁶

It is interesting how closely the analysis of this German traditionalist concords with that of sections of the contemporary French avant-garde; the right and left wing sharing a belief in the social function of art. Health, purity, faith: these were already on the menu of would-be reformers of French literature in France itself. Although he made no mention of *renouveau*, Lorenz Krapp came very close in his argumentation to the goals

of the group of artists, including Romain Rolland, who rallied around the banner of the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*. Dr Krapp did not refer to the activities of the *Cahiers* and he would appear to have been unaware of their existence. The review, founded and edited by Charles Péguy and which claimed Romain Rolland as one of its most important contributors, became a spiritual guide to the pre-war period 1900-1914. The *Cahiers* passionately fought the maxim of art for art's sake, considering it an insult, a debasement of the role of art; truly valuable forms of art were those connected by umbilical cord to the life of the nation and its people.⁴⁷

Health, purity, faith: who could provide the French people with such a literary and moral programme, the German philologist had asked in 1910? Of one thing he was certain: "Aus dem Macadampflaster von Paris kann niemals die duftige Blüte des Volkslieds entspringen."⁴⁸ Yet shortly after publication of "Das junge Frankreich", Germany was introduced to a man who seemed to echo many aspects of Dr Krapp's moral if not literary programme: Romain Rolland. At a time when the Germans still felt justified in lamenting France, as Fontane had done, as a "schönes, verfallenes Land,"⁴⁹ a stylistically sober and deeply moral French writer was waiting in the wings.

One can see that Otto Grautoff, Romain Rolland's translator, was echoing the feelings of many of his contemporaries, when he wrote of the French author in 1913:

Vielleicht ist es vielen fast erstaunlich, daß diese Stimme aus dem Lande tönt, dem wir so oft neurasthenische Dekadenz vorwerfen, das wir gewöhnt sind als die Brutstätte später, verderbender Begierden anzusehen.⁵⁰

Grautoff believed that the German reader would accompany Jean-Christophe on his journey of discovery with the same feelings of surprise and disbelief. Could France really be the home of health, vigour, spiritual harmony and a clear bright beauty? Hardly!:

Wie der junge Johann Christof glauben wir nicht, daß Gesundheit, Kraft, seelisches Gleichgewicht, klare helle Schönheit auch auf der andern Seite des Rheines zu Hause sein können, und immer lauter fragen wir: Wer ist dieser fremde Dichter?⁵¹

It now seems rather conceited that Germans felt more than justified in staking such exclusive claim to these qualities. It would appear to have been quite natural pre-1914 for even well-educated Germans to embrace these somewhat crude clichés.

Romain Rolland was acutely aware of this German prejudice towards France and her literature. He had become acquainted with it through his numerous personal, artistic and academic contacts with Germany. When Louis Gillet a student and close friend of Rolland's, took up a teaching post in Greifswald, Pommerania in 1900, he kept his mentor closely informed of the image France held there. Gillet was bitterly disappointed to note that Germany was very disdainful of both France and her literature. In consolation, Romain Rolland offered him the following advice:

Montrez-leur ce que c'est un Français. Apprenez à ces Allemands futiles sous leur apparente gravité, la profondeur de cette race frivole [...]. En tout cas, sabrez hardiment leur préjugé méprisant et ridicule d'une France de plaisir (comme on dit: une fille de joie), et dressez en face de la jeune Allemagne, dix siècles de batailles pour Dieu et pour la grandeur de l'esprit humain.⁵²

These words demonstrate the very strong antagonism Rolland felt towards certain contemporary German intellectual circles. Nothing was guaranteed to provoke Rolland more than what he considered to be ignorant criticism of France. Richard Strauss was to learn this to his chagrin when he made the mistake of attacking the French language in a letter to Rolland in the summer of 1905. Strauss contended that whilst Richard Wagner had breathed new life into the German language, French had essentially remained petrified in the tradition of the Eighteenth Century tragedy, and become a fossil, an artefact. Romain Rolland rounded on the composer in a surprisingly emotional diatribe, casting the net of his recriminations far and wide:

Vous êtes étonnants, vous autres, Allemands; vous ne comprenez rien à notre poésie, absolument rien; et vous la jugez avec une certitude imperturbable. [...] Vous êtes trop orgueilleux en ce moment, en Allemagne. Vous croyez tout comprendre, et vous ne vous donnez aucune peine pour comprendre. Tant pis pour vous, si vous ne comprenez pas!⁵³

Rolland believed that Germany's political arrogance was coupled with an artistic and moral contempt for the non-German. He was aware that France was best known abroad in the early years of this century for the theatre of Alexandre Dumas fils, Victorien Sardou, Henri de Bornier and Edmond Rostand.⁵⁴ Rolland detested the tendency to judge France by what he considered to be such low artistic standards, to circumscribe her greatness with her "petits auteurs".⁵⁵ He believed that Germany never had the tenacity or more importantly the desire to go beyond a surface knowledge of France, to attempt an understanding of the country's greatest thinkers: Descartes, Pascal, Auguste Comte. Perhaps, Rolland suggested, this was because even the cultured German unconsciously sought a confirmation of his prejudice about French frivolity: "il ne pourrait venir à la pensée d'un Allemand qu'un Français puisse être aussi sérieux, et parfois aussi profond qu'un Allemand."⁵⁶ Claims to the possession of a greater seriousness and depth than Latin peoples certainly flattered German national ego, which was severely under attack from all sides at the time. Perhaps we might now suggest that German critics simultaneously satisfied two needs. By consuming France's "écrivains de boulevard",⁵⁷ for whom Germany exhibited an undoubted taste, they could enjoy the frivolity, the sexual licence, whilst at the same time claiming cultural and literary superiority.

Romain Rolland himself concluded from this that it would have been preferable for France to remain unknown abroad, rather than to be known as she was, "une fille de joie."⁵⁸ He consciously sought to re-conquer some of the lost literary and philosophical territory, to which Germany had staked such confident claim. *Jean-Christophe* was to be the weapon with which he fought for a more just, a more profound appraisal of France - not only abroad

but also in France itself. The very success of this difficult novel with a French readership, if not with French criticism, confirmed Romain Rolland in his faith. When in the summer of 1909 *Dans la Maison* sold ten editions in one week, without one mention in the press, Rolland felt that he could congratulate himself upon having delivered proof of a depth of seriousness in France, hitherto unsuspected:

Quand je pense combien des volumes comme *Dans la maison* et la *Foire sur la Place* sont difficiles à lire, indigestes, bourrés d'idées, je me convainc de plus en plus de l'injustice de l'opinion européenne (et surtout germanique) sur la frivolité française. Je suis content d'avoir donné la preuve que les "frivoles" Français sont capables d'écrire, et même de lire, des livres aussi longs et aussi ennuyeux que ceux de la vieille Allemagne.⁵⁹

Four years later Ernst Stadler was to comment on the success of *Jean-Christophe* in France and was to draw very similar conclusions to those of Rolland. The very success of the novel became a symbol to him, indeed proof of the regeneration of France. Stadler recorded his surprise:

Seltsam, daß uns dieses Buch [...] aus dem Lande Balzacs und Flauberts gekommen ist. Noch seltsamer, daß ihm Frankreich einen enthusiastischen Empfang bereitet hat. Sollten sich hier nicht gewisse Wandlungen des französischen Geistes anzeigen? Noch vor zehn Jahren hätte man bei unsern Nachbarn über die dozierende Lehrhaftigkeit und den intransigenten Puritanismus dieses Romanes die Achseln gezuckt.⁶⁰

Romain Rolland was concerned to enlarge the boundaries of what was considered French in both literature and real life; to put some of the reality of France back into her fictional image. One of the problems he was constantly to meet, however, was the seeming reluctance of the critical world, both at home and abroad to accept him and his values as "French". It would seem that, rather than broaden his own definition, it was more convenient for the French critic simply to consider Rolland 'foreign'. In Germany the question was to take a different turn. Critics there did indeed

see Romain Rolland as alien to France, but they were more than happy to enlist him as one of their own.

In some instances, the adjective German was to be taken very literally when applied to Rolland with certain critics initially believing that the name had to be a pseudonym for a German author.⁶¹ Hermann Bahr recorded his stupefaction at finding such a novel in French, for *Jean-Christophe* represented to his mind the philosophical and moral idealism of the Germany of old: "denn dies war mir ja nicht neu, es ist doch urdeutsch, alle wahrhaften Deutschen haben es verkündet, von Meister Eckehart bis Goethe".⁶² Was it possible that a Frenchman, of all people, had come to remind contemporary Germany of her great past? *Wilhelm Meister, Der grüne Heinrich*:⁶³ these works seemed to German-speaking critics to be Rolland's literary forerunners. In choosing to set out the fate of a great individual from cradle to grave, Rolland was felt to have touched very closely on the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* and he awakened powerful parallels in German minds which were only really to be explored by critics in any depth much later.⁶⁴

Romain Rolland's German-speaking critics shared the conviction that he had consciously placed himself outside French literary tradition. As we have seen, many also believed that he had consciously or unconsciously placed himself within German tradition. It mattered little to these first critics to question whether their appropriation of Romain Rolland represented any authorial intent. There was an assumption in some articles that in order to have come so close to the morality and style of the *Bildungsroman*, Rolland must have been emulating German literature in *Jean-Christophe*. It is not until later that Rolland's influences are examined in greater depth by German critics. Suffice it to say at this point therefore, that Romain Rolland's literary mentors, with the exception of Goethe, came almost exclusively from outside Germany, Count Tolstoy probably affecting Rolland's concept of the novel more than any other single writer.

Whilst traditionalist France condemned the lack of beauty and clarity of *Jean-Christophe*, Germany broadly seemed to approve of the novel stylistically. German speakers felt at ease with the form of the novel and Otto Grautoff for one congratulated Romain Rolland on his victory over the cult of language, the cult of the word. In his estimation, Rolland had broken the magical spell which bedevilled French literature, the obsession with beauty of form. He had tamed the power of the word:

Rolland wollte in seinem *Johann Christof* den Stil zu neuer Bescheidenheit erziehen: er wollte nicht, daß er um seiner selbst Willen glänze, sondern die durchsichtige Hülle für den Gedanken, das Bild sei.⁶⁵

Unlike some of their French counterparts, most German admirers of *Jean-Christophe* did not deny Rolland's artistry with words. Otto Grautoff, in his short biography of 1914, showed that *Jean-Christophe* was composed with a great deal of care. He analysed the musical aspects of the novel, its "sanfte Akkorden", "Harmonien", "beständiges Crescendo und Decrescendo des ganzen Orchesters."⁶⁶ Grautoff praised the rhythms of the language, its often alliterative style and its symphonic qualities. A modesty of style should not be equated with an absence of style, Otto Grautoff commented pertinently. Neither was *Jean-Christophe* regarded as amorphous. The hero of the novel was felt to give the work its necessary unity and coherence and *Jean-Christophe* remained in the eyes of most German critics a wholly satisfactory aesthetic experience, in spite of its length and complexity. Herbert Stegemann, writing in the *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, felt that Rolland had mastered the fullness of his material, the presentation of which he found extremely condensed. He praised the "ungeheure Fülle des Stoffes, die trotz des außerordentlichen Umfanges des Werkes immer aufs äußerste komprimiert erscheint."⁶⁷ and felt that *Jean-Christophe* had been written "mit einer zwingenden Gewalt und einer fortreißenden Größe."⁶⁸ Franz Farga of the *Pester Lloyd* also gave his full approval to the novel as "ein wahres 'Monument' [...] breit, mächtig und ausladend, so recht geschaffen, um sich von allen Seiten bewundern und stets neue Schönheiten entdecken zu lassen."⁶⁹

However, not all of Rolland's German-speaking critics were so convinced of the strictly aesthetic value of *Jean-Christophe*, some of them believing that the French author had overstepped the stylistic boundaries not only of French literature but also of German literary taste. Whilst generally enthusiastic about the novel, Ernst Stadler, for example, felt the need to comment on the longwindedness and occasional pedantry with which it was composed.⁷⁰ Another critic, Fritz Schotthoefer, who again saw a tremendous power in the novel, felt that Rolland had been overwhelmed by his material and had failed in his duties as an author to digest and organise:

Romain Rolland schien der Fülle nicht Meister werden zu können, er verliert sich in ihrem Wirrsal, und man fühlt, wie er sich überwältigen läßt, wie seine kompositorische Überlegenheit versagt.⁷¹

This was, however, the exception rather than the rule in pre-war days. No single German article was discovered dating from this period which condemns *Jean-Christophe* outright on the grounds that it was stylistically and formally weak. This stands in contrast to Le Cardonnell and so many of his colleagues who deemed technical weakness sufficient to banish the novel from all pretensions to literary greatness. This is further confirmation of the weight given in France to questions of artistic style. In Germany, it would seem, strength of conviction and passion were sufficient to carry a work of art. In traditional Parisian literary circles they were not.

Such were the formal and stylistic observations of Romain Rolland's early German-speaking critics. There were two further facets of the novel which were to fascinate them even more. Firstly, Rolland had chosen as his hero a German and placed the action of volumes I to IV in Germany. Secondly, the picture of France that emerges from the pages of *Jean-Christophe* was very different to the images which persisted on the other side of the Rhine.

Let us first consider the question of Jean-Christophe's nationality. It was a matter much discussed from the start on both sides of the Rhine, where for the most part Romain Rolland's fictional hero was seen as German in a very

literal sense of the word. It would have been fairer and more accurate, one could argue, to see *Jean-Christophe* as the personification of a musical genius or the *bon sauvage* returned to denounce the baseness of the age, or indeed the author himself in the guise of Jean-Christophe. These are matters to which we shall turn our attention later. Yet much of the subtlety and complexity of this question was lost on many early French critics and their counterparts across the Rhine alike for whom Jean Christophe was quite simply a German.

French critics were hurt and insulted by Rolland's decision to make the hero of his *roman fleuve* a German. G. Pourcel, writing in *Le Parthénon* in October 1913, asked reproachfully:

M. Romain Rolland a choisi son héros allemand. On le lui a reproché. L'amour propre français eût préféré un génie de notre race. Serions-nous appauvris au point de n'en pouvoir produire?⁷²

Not surprisingly, that which provoked disquiet and displeasure among Rolland's fellow countrymen, brought the French author a tremendous wave of sympathy in Germany. Acknowledgement, gratitude, deep appreciation, those are the words which best express the tone of these early reviews. It would seem that *Jean-Christophe* rose above the status of a novel in German eyes to an act of *rapprochement*, "eine Geistestat von seltenstem Mut,"⁷³ as Franz Farga termed it. For the novel was seen to offer both a sympathetic picture of German life and a superb portrait of German genius. At last, Germany could look into a mirror fashioned for her by a foreigner and be pleased with what she found.

Numerous indeed are the expressions of surprise and gratitude on the part of Romain Rolland's German reviewers. Germans were used to being misunderstood, Otto Grautoff wrote; they were certainly not accustomed to being treated with "nicht nur Gerechtigkeit, sondern liebevollem Verstehen der besten tiefsten Seiten unseres Charakters."⁷⁴ Franz Farga too lamented the fact that Germans were caricatured in contemporary foreign writing in such uncomplimentary fashion as ill-mannered, brutish and cunning. The

German, when he appeared at all, was given pride of place as the spy, the arrogant boor, the sly banker:

Wenn man ihm [dem Deutschen] in einem fremdsprachigen Roman, in einem Theaterstück begegnete, so war es sicherlich nur eine abstoßend skizzierte Nebenfigur, ein Spion, ein manierloser Protz, ein listiger Frankfurter Bankier, dessen Jargon man mit verbissener Wut verhöhnte.⁷⁵

German-speaking critics, even those like Farga who came from Budapest, were expressing a commonplace belief that the rest of Europe bore an unjustified grudge against Germany. They believed that the tendency either wholly to ignore the existence of Germany or to caricature her people as arrogant and brutish, was in truth an unconscious expression of jealousy at the great political and economic achievements of Young Germany. Envious of this new-found power, Europe seemed to have plotted to exclude Germany, to maintain her in frosty isolation. Just as in diplomatic and political terms she was being prevented from taking her rightful "Platz an der Sonne,"⁷⁶ foreign literary circles seemed determined to disavow Germany's claim to civilisation and culture:

Man wollte geflissentlich ignorieren, daß der ungeheure ökonomische Aufschwung einer Elite wahrer Kraftmenschen zu verdanken war, daß nicht umsonst die übrige Kulturmenschheit die wissenschaftlichen Methoden Deutschlands sich zu eigen mache, daß auf künstlerischem Gebiete kein anderes Volk ein so heißes, unablässiges Ringen aufweise.⁷⁷

When one brings to mind this sense of ill-ease in pre-1914 Germany, one can better comprehend the surprise, gratitude and relief with which the Germans greeted *Jean-Christophe*. For the novel was taken as a long wished-for confirmation from the outside world that Germany was indeed home to a great cultural tradition.

Romain Rolland was therefore seen to break with the consistently insulting depiction of Germany as undertaken by his fellow countrymen. Against the

tidal wave of chauvinism sweeping France, Rolland had dared to place a German hero at the heart of his masterpiece, not a comic or ironic figure, but a true hero. And, wrote Otto Grautoff, Jean-Christophe was one fictional German of whom the entire nation could be proud:

In Romain Rollands großem Werk aber finden wir [...] *den* Deutschen, wie wir ihn selbst nicht größer, reiner träumen können, einen Helden der Tat und des Fühlens, vernehmen ein hohes Lied germanischer Kraft, sittlicher Gesundheit, künstlerischer Reinheit, alles besiegender niederzwingender Freude am Leben.⁷⁸

Vigour, health, purity and joy: here we have a virtual fulfilment of Dr Krapp's recipe for the salvation of French literature and, what is more, Germany could congratulate herself that it came in Germanic guise.

Yet, in the midst of all this enthusiasm, what are we to make of Ernest Seillière's reservations about introducing *Jean-Christophe* to a German audience, his warnings of the "recht scharfen Kritik der durchschnittlichen deutschen Geistesart, ja selbst der großen Männer germanischen Blutes"?⁷⁹ His reservations would seem to have been misplaced, particularly in this pre-war period. Most reviewers made no mention of the hefty criticisms of turn-of-the-century Germany which run through whole sections of *Jean-Christophe*, or simply passed over them in one or two sentences. At this stage they seemed to refuse to admit that Rolland had established a dichotomy with regard to Germany, opposing the modern state to the world of her great artists. Otto Grautoff did attempt a brief analysis of the question only to conclude however, that Romain Rolland offers a gentle and essentially good-humoured rebuke to certain aspects of modern German life. He believed that Rolland identified "Schwächen und Lächerlichkeiten"⁸⁰ in German society, whilst attacking "Niedrigkeiten und Falschheiten"⁸¹ in his native land. Weakness and foolishness were infinitely more excusable than baseness and falsity, and Grautoff implied that Romain Rolland saw France as a more corrupt nation than Germany. For these 'opinions', Grautoff told his readers, Rolland had become a martyr to the chauvinism of French public opinion:

So lange Rolland Deutschland kritisiert hatte, fand man das sehr amüsan; jetzt aber, da er mit durchdringendem Blick sein eigen Land betrachtete und für seine Verderbtheiten schröffere Worte fand, als für die mehr humorvollgesehenen Schwächen und Lächerlichkeiten des Nachbarlandes, schrie man empört dagegen und schalt den Dichter vaterlandsfeindlich und vaterlandslos.⁸²

Grautoff and his colleagues for the most part chose not to acknowledge the ambiguity with which Romain Rolland treated the question of Germany and German art. These German critics felt that they had found a rare friend abroad and they were not about to compromise that friendship by submitting it to rigorous critical analysis. Rolland was deemed to have shown Germany love, to which in return the only adequate response was felt to be, in the words of Stefan Zweig, love:

Liebe hat immer nur eine Antwort: Liebe. Und so wird die Antwort Deutschlands sein, seien Sie dessen sicher, wenn nun im Frühjahr die ersten Bände Ihres Werkes auch bei uns erscheinen werden und man erstaunt einen unbekannten Freund jenseits der Grenze erkennen wird.⁸³

Stefan Zweig thanked Romain Rolland for having judged Germany by her geniuses: "Sie haben Deutschland groß gesehen, weil Sie auf Goethe und Beethoven blickten",⁸⁴ he wrote in his open letter of December 1912.

Certainly, Rolland had developed a love for Germany because it was home to his greatest artistic hero, Beethoven. He had once written to Louis Gillet:

J' aime les Allemands parce qu'un peu de sang de Beethoven est, malgré tout, en eux; comme j' aime les Anglais pour l'amour de Shakespeare. En France, j' ai beau chercher: je n' ai pas de ces grands amis éternels [...].⁸⁵

Romain Rolland's judgements of contemporary Germany, however, were one aspect of *Jean-Christophe* upon which Stefan Zweig appeared reluctant to dwell. As an Austrian, he would doubtless have been less personally touched by negative images of Germany. Yet, one could argue that one of the major

themes to emerge from the novel is the betrayal by Germany of her great past. If Rolland loved Germany, it was certainly not the Germany of the turn-of-the-century. There existed in his mind a hiatus between the great figures of a grand past and much more brutal reality of the present. Rolland despised the *Realpolitik* of the new German nation. The "tyran comédien,"⁸⁶ Wilhelm II and his entourage, he felt, were busily stripping contemporary Germany of international admiration and respect:

L' Allemagne le verra plus tard. - Ils le verront tous, ces politiciens réalistes, si fiers d' être réalistes, ils verront ce qu' il en coûte d' enlever à l' Allemagne ce qui faisait sa grandeur dans l' histoire: sa pureté, sa conscience morale, son idéalisme souverain.⁸⁷

In *Jean-Christophe* Romain Rolland sought to remind Germany of her past. Jean-Christophe, as an embodiment of purity, moral conscience and idealism, was certainly not created to praise Germany as she was, but as she had been and could be once again. This dichotomy was only to come into critical focus after the outbreak of war.

Ernst Stadler, the major Expressionist poet, was one of the very few reviewers in the period up to 1914 to acknowledge and even accept the depth of criticism of contemporary Germany to be found in *Jean-Christophe*. Jean-Christophe, he wrote, recognised Germany not only at her best but also at her worst:

Er sieht knirschend das deutsche Pharisäertum, das sich ringsum breit macht, den Mangel an Ehrlichkeit und Freimut, den krassen Materialismus, der sich heuchlerisch hinter Gemüt und Seele verschanzt, das stumpfe Behagen, dem das Größte und das Elendeste gleichviel gelten.⁸⁸

Rolland, Stadler believed, understood Germany's distortion of her own idealism and, just as Nietzsche before him, had been compelled to condemn the "Verlogenheit der idealistischen Phrase."⁸⁹ One can feel from the pages

of the review how personally Stadler had been touched by Rolland's account of the position of the artist in German society:

Er sieht auch die Einsamkeit, die noch mitten in ihrem Volke um die besten Deutschen ist, ihre geistige Abgeschnittenheit, ihre Zusammenhanglosigkeit mit dem Leben der Nation, ihre Unterdrückung durch die herrschende Kaste: "Nicht die Künstler fehlten in Deutschland, aber den Künstlern fehlt die Luft."⁹⁰

One senses his wholehearted agreement with Romain Rolland's assessment.

Yet Ernst Stadler by no means found only criticism of Germany within the pages of *Jean-Christophe*. He also found an acknowledgement of the "großen und ewigen Kräfte, die im Deutschtum liegen."⁹¹ We note that he uses the term *Deutschtum* rather than *Deutschland* here. For Rolland had succeeded in creating a vision of Germany which went beyond the reaches of history and which struck a very poignant cord in the hearts of many German readers. Whether a critic chose to address the sometimes very negative portrait of Germany, or whether he decided to gloss over this aspect of *Jean-Christophe*, all of Romain Rolland's early German reviewers concurred in the belief that he was Germany's greatest literary friend since Mme de Staël. "Rolland ist ein Freund wahren deutschen Wesens," Paul Stefan concluded, "die deutsche Innigkeit hat es ihm angetan."⁹²

Historians of the era, Stadler said, would refer to these tomes which bear such accurate witness to the mood of France in the early 1900's. *Jean-Christophe*'s success testified to the "mystische Auferstehung der Rasse,"⁹³ the "Wiedergeburt des französischen Geistes,"⁹⁴ a France reborn out of the ashes of *l'année terrible*. Ernst Stadler was not alone in seeing *Jean-Christophe* as an invaluable introduction to aspects of France hidden from the superficial public gaze. Stefan Zweig and many others congratulated Romain Rolland on having revealed a peace-loving, hardworking and honest France, so often obscured by the belligerent, pleasure seeking and corrupt ruling elite. Zweig wrote:

Denn tatsächlich, es gibt zwei Frankreich, heute stärker als je, das lärmende und das stille [...]. Es gibt ein Frankreich der Tagesjournale, der Theaterfabrikanten, der Bernstein, Croisset, Bataille, der eitlen Gelehrten, der dekorationsgierigen Politiker, ein Frankreich, das die Nation überschreitet und für die naive Masse das Wirkliche ist.⁹⁵

Romain Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, he believed, offered the opportunity of looking beneath the shrill façade to the reality of French life, a chance to uncover "unter den gallischen Gebärden das wirkliche Frankreich [...] das stille und schaffende."⁹⁶ In so doing Rolland was appealing to his German readership to look beyond the irritating chauvinism of France's political figures, beyond the frivolity of her theatres, to a country which was in many ways surprisingly similar to Germany. Stefan Zweig urged German readers of *Jean-Christophe* to accept Romain Rolland's portrait of France not as fiction but as an expression of an urgent reality: "mit Ihren Augen wollen und müssen wir Frankreich sehen."⁹⁷

Platzhoff-Lejeune was equally convinced that Rolland had come closer to portraying the real France than many before him:

Er versichert und beweist uns, daß wir Unrecht tun, die zahlreichen und geräuschvollen Snobs der Pariser literarischen Mode für authentische und typische Vertreter des französischen Denkens, Fühlens, Wollens und Handelns zu halten. [...] Den Dienst hat Rolland - nicht als erster, aber doch wohl als eindrucksvollster Interpret - seinem Lande geleistet, daß er es dem Auslande in seinen besten Eigenschaften, in seinem reinsten Streben mit großer Kunst und warmer Lebendigkeit vor Augen führte.⁹⁸

Romain Rolland's undoubted stress upon shared values and common goals moved many German critics to proclamations of fraternity. They spoke of the need for greater mutual understanding and sympathy. *Jean-Christophe* seemed to offer to German critics a hope, albeit slender, that war between these traditional enemies could be avoided. Romain Rolland became the interpreter of the new France. "Er ist der Offenbarer des neuen kommenden

jungen Frankreich, das wir nur lieben und bewundern können," wrote Platzhoff-Lejeune.⁹⁹ For the France which Rolland portrayed did not feed on the bitter seeds of *revanche* but sought more than anything else to live in peace. With this message, German critics considered Rolland to have become a more effective diplomat than all the official representatives of the profession. Herbert Stegemann concluded:

Jedenfalls: wenn überhaupt allmählich eine Verständigung zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich möglich ist, so trägt ein Werk, wie das Rollands, dazu tausendmal mehr bei als Kongresse, Festbankette und phrasenhafte Aussprachen.¹⁰⁰

Jean-Christophe was seen to have transcended the bounds of the novel, to touch and influence the real world. It had become a treatise, a programme for reconciliation between France and Germany. One much-quoted passage from the novel, an exchange between Olivier and Jean-Christophe, was to become almost a prayer. Stadler cited it, like so many other critics, at the end of his review: "Mag der Krieg kommen! Er wird nicht unsern treuen Handschlag trennen und den Aufstieg unseres brüderlichen Geistes."¹⁰¹ Sadly, Ernst Stadler, who himself had worked for a cultural *rapprochement* between France and Germany, was to be among the first volunteers and the first casualties of the Great War, killed at Ypres in 1914. Perhaps we shall never truly understand that terrible psychological and emotional journey that Ernst Stadler and his contemporaries on both sides of the Rhine, made from the expression of peace to the carnage of war, from *Jean-Christophe* to the battlefield. As a programme of reconciliation, *Jean-Christophe* failed to prevent the War. The tendency on the part of German criticism, to regard the novel not only as the antipode of *revanche* but also its antidote, had been a gross overestimation of the power of literature in general and this novel in particular.

Romain Rolland was greatly appreciated as a writer by his pre-1914 German critics. His true significance, however, was felt to lie elsewhere. There existed a strong inclination, even before the First World War, to celebrate Rolland for his integrity, his moral stand on burning contemporary issues.

One of Rolland's most devoted admirers, Stefan Zweig, admitted this quite openly: "Die Vollendung Ihres *Jean-Christophe* ist für mich noch mehr ein ethisches Ereignis als ein literarisches."¹⁰² The work, it would seem, was almost too real to be fiction. Could it be that this honouring of Rolland as a moral force together with the direct assimilation of *Jean-Christophe* with the real world, actually sowed the seeds of his literary decline? As the burning issues of the day became history, what would remain in literary critical terms to sustain Rolland's reputation as a writer?

Romain Rolland was seen as many things by his early German critics: an admirer of Germany, a successor to Germany's great writers of old, an historian, a statesman, a diplomat, a moral leader, a German! A French patriot? A taskmaster of contemporary Germany? A critic of German Idealism? A minor literary craftsman? These concepts seemed to get lost somewhere in the throes of excitement at the discovery of an unexpected friend. Their gradual emergence will form the basis of the coming chapters.

Notes

- 1 Bahr, Hermann: *Bilderbuch*. Wiener Literarische Anstalt, Vienna 1921. Chapter on Romain Rolland, pp 142/147 (dated March 1914). Outside France and Germany, Rolland's reputation had already been established by 1910. Bahr relates how Rolland's name was mentioned in the same breath as those of Maeterlinck and Anatole France in England, for example.
- 2 Ibid., p 145.
- 3 Rolland, Romain: *Jean-Christophe*, vol. I. Albin Michel, Paris 1931, p 7.
- 4 Rolland, Romain: *Malwida von Meysenbug*. Choix de lettres à Malwida von Meysenbug. Preface by Edouard Monond-Herzen. Cahiers Romain Rolland I (hereafter cited as *CRR I*). Albin Michel, Paris 1948, p 186.
- 5 *CRR* 11, p 102. Rolland informs his friend in a letter dated 15 April 1911.
- 6 Ibid., p 172. Letter dated 14 March 1913.
- 7 Rolland, Romain: *Fräulein Elsa*. Lettres de Romain Rolland à Elsa Wolff. Presented by René Cheval. Cahiers Romain Rolland XIV (hereafter cited as *CRR XIV*). Albin Michel, Paris 1964, p 207. Letter dated 12 March 1909. Romain Rolland quoted from Hermann Bahr's letter which continues: "Je vous serais très reconnaissant de me dire si vous êtes vraiment Français, ce que je ne peux presque pas croire."
- 8 Rolland, Romain: *Chère Sofia*. Choix de lettres de Romain Rolland à Sofia Bertolini Guerrieri-Gonzaga, vol I (1901 - 1908). Preface by Umberto Zanotti Bianco. Cahiers Romain Rolland X (hereafter cited as *CRR X*). Albin Michel, Paris 1959, p 228. Letter dated 23 August 1905.
- 9 *CRR XIV*, pp 46 - 47. Letter dated 15 June 1906.
- 10 *CRR X*, p 331. Letter dated 3 March 1908.

- 11 Zweig, Stefan: *Die Welt von Gestern*. Erinnerungen eines Europäers. Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1980, pp 150 - 151. Zweig recounts how he chanced upon *Jean-Christophe* at the studio of a Russian sculptress.
- 12 Unpublished letter. Fonds Romain Rolland held at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (hereafter cited as FRR).
- 13 Stefan, Paul: "Ein französischer Musiker-Roman". In: *Vossische Zeitung*, no 158 (Literarische Umschau), 27 March 1914.
- 14 Unpublished letter dated 23 April 1911. FRR. Zweig offered to assume this role without remuneration.
- 15 Unpublished letter dated 24 December 1912. FRR. Rütten & Loening were perhaps not initially as enthusiastic about Romain Rolland as Stefan Zweig here suggests. The Frankfurt publishing house had originally planned to publish only volumes I - IV of *Jean-Christophe*. Otto Grautoff recounted how both Stefan Zweig and Hermann Bahr had interceded to impress the folly of such a decision on Rütten & Loening. (Unpublished letter dated 13 December 1912. FRR).
- 16 Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle*, p 112.
- 17 CRR X, p 337.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle*, p 114. Having analysed the official *compte rendu* of the *Académie*, Jeanneret came to the following conclusion: "En somme, presque un éreintement pour un compte rendu de prix littéraire! [...] Les immortels se seraient-ils bornés à enregistrer un succès qu'ils ne comprenaient pas."
- 20 CRR X, p 365.
- 21 Ibid., p 368. Letter dated 16 September 1908.
- 22 CRR XI, p 40. Letter dated 2 July 1909.

23 See: Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle*, p 175. Jeanneret identified certain extreme right-wing admirers of Romain Rolland, most notably Henri Lagrange of *Action Française*. Lagrange heartily approved of what he saw as Jean-Christophe's anti-semitism and germanophobia.

24 See: Introduction, note 7.

25 Ibid, p 410.

26 Ibid, p 414.

27 Ibid, p 411.

28 See: Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle*, pp 15 - 16.

29 See: Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle* [...], pp 140 - 144. Jeanneret demonstrates this consensus at length and asks: "D' où vient ce consensus sur une idée manifestement contraire à la réalité du texte?" (Ibid, p 144). There is certainly no easy answer to this question. Suffice it to say at this point that German critics were, on the whole, more at ease with *Jean Christophe* than their French counterparts.

30 Quoted after: Ullmann, Stephen: *Style in the French Novel*. Cambridge University Press 1957, p 2.

31 Guilbeaux, Henri: "Romain Rolland". In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XV, no 5, 1 December 1912, cols 303 - 304.

32 Ibid, col 305.

33 Guilbeaux, Henri: "Romain Rolland". In: *Vossische Zeitung*, no 8, 6 January 1914, morning edition, pp 2 - 3. Guilbeaux was by this point much happier to refer to Rolland's style and to attempt an analysis of it.

34 It is doubtful whether Romain Rolland would have enjoyed or accepted such "praise". He saw *Jean-Christophe* as a work which did possess a very definite style, influenced by the principles of the symphony. Without doubt the very long gestation period of the novel was also attributable in part to careful composition.

- 35 Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle*, p 140.
- 36 Le Cardonnel, G: "Ein jungfranzösischer Roman", p 414.
- 37 Guilbeaux, Henri: "Romain Rolland". In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol xv, no 5, 1 December 1912, col 306.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Rolland, Romain: *Un beau visage à tous sens*. Choix de lettres de Romain Rolland (1886 - 1944). Preface by André Chamson. Cahiers Romain Rolland XVII (hereafter referred to as *CRR XVII*). Albin Michel, Paris 1967, p 105. Letter to the Italian critic Giovanni Papini dated 27 April 1912. Papini had said Rolland was influenced by German and Protestant ideas. Romain Rolland rejected this description and added: "Mais ces lignes pourront servir peut-être un jour, plus tard, à établir la vérité." (Ibid). It would seem that Rolland was understating his ability to read German here. He had informed his friend Malwida von Meysenbug that he was reading the works of Goethe and Schiller in the original in a letter of 8 September 1890. See: Romain Rolland und Malwida von Meysenbug - *Ein Briefwechsel*. J Engelhorn, Stuttgart 1932, p 43.
- 40 *CRR X*, p 365. Letter dated 2 September 1908.
- 41 *CRR XI*, p 21. Letter dated 18 March 1909.
- 42 Seillière, Ernest: "Romain Rolland's [sic] *Jean-Christophe*." In: *Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschaft*, vol VI, April 1912, cols 830 - 850.
- 43 Ibid., col 832.
- 44 The German Romanist scholar, E R Curtius, discusses the image of French literature pre-1914. His contribution is examined in some depth in Chapter V of the present study.
- 45 Krapp, Lorenz: "Das junge Frankreich." In: *Der Gral*, vol IV, no 7, 15 April 1910, p 413.

46 Krapp, Lorenz: "Das junge Frankreich." In: *Der Gral*, vol IV, no 8, 15 May 1910, p 485.

47 For a full discussion of this see: Halévy, David: *Péguy et les Cahiers de la Quinzaine*. New York 1947. Romain Rolland's own study of Péguy also provides invaluable insights into the literary and political ambitions of the *Cahiers* and its followers. See: *Péguy*, (2 vols). Albin Michel, Paris 1944.

48 Krapp, Lorenz: "Das junge Frankreich." In: *Der Gral*, vol IV, no 8, p 480.

49 Ibid., p 485. Krapp wrote: "Aber bis dahin gilt auch von der Dichtung Frankreichs Fontanes trübes Wort: "Schönes, verfallenes Land!"

50 See note 1.

51 Ibid.

52 Rolland, Romain & Gillet, Louis: *Correspondance entre Louis Gillet et Romain Rolland*. Choix de lettres établi par Mme Louis Gillet et Mme Romain Rolland. Preface by Paul Claudel. Cahiers Romain Rolland II (hereafter cited as *CRR II*). Albin Michel, Paris 1950, p 101. Letter dated 16 November 1900.

53 Rolland, Romain & Strauss, Richard: *Correspondance Fragments de journal*. Preface by Gustave Samazemith. Cahiers Romain Rolland III (hereafter cited as *CRR III*). Albin Michel, Paris 1951, pp 44 - 47. Letter dated 16 July 1905.

54 *CRR II*, p 96. Letter dated 8 November 1900.

55 *CRR X*, p 145. Letter dated 27 October 1903.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

- 59 CRR XI, p 35. Letter dated 13 July 1909. My emphasis.
- 60 Stadler, Ernst: "Romain Rolland: *Jean-Christophe*". In: *Die weißen Blätter*, vol I, no 2, October 1913, p 169.
- 61 Bahr, Hermann: *Bilderbuch*, p 144.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 The parallels drawn between Romain Rolland and these works are numerous. See for example: Schotthoefer, F: "Romain Rollands Johann Christof". In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XVII, no 20, 15 July 1914, cols 1394 - 1396, and Platzhoff-Lejeune, Eduard: "Romain Rolland". In: *Deutsche Rundschau*, vol XL, no 7, April 1914, p 152-155.
- 64 See in particular: Ostermann, Walter: "Das Bild des Menschen in Goethes *Wilhelm Meister*, Kellers *Grünem Heinrich* und R Rollands *Jean-Christophe*". In: *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher*, Jahrbuch 1918, pp 1 - 116.
- 65 Grautoff, Otto: *Romain Rolland*. Rütten & Loening, Frankfurt-am-Main 1914, p 16.
- 66 Ibid., p 17.
- 67 Stegemann, Herbert: "Romain Rolland". In: *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, vol XXI, no 163, 15 July 1914, (tägliche Unterhaltungsbeilage), p 2.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Farga, Franz: "Romain Rolland". In: *Pester Lloyd*, vol LX, no 183, 3 August 1913, p 34.
- 70 Stadler, Ernst: "Romain Rolland: *Jean-Christophe*", p 168.
- 71 Schotthoefer, F: "Romain Rollands *Johann Christof*", col 1396.
- 72 After: Cheval, René: *Romain Rolland La France L'Allemagne et la Guerre* (hereafter cited as Cheval, René: *Romain Rolland*). Presses universitaires de France, Paris 1963, p 164.

- 73 Farga, Franz: "Romain Rolland", p 33.
- 74 Grautoff, Otto: "Romain Rolland". In: *Straßburger Post*, no 940, 21 August 1913, morning edition.
- 75 Farga, Franz: "Romain Rolland". p 34.
- 76 Bernard von Bülow, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said in his first speech to the *Reichstag*: "Wir wollen niemand in den Schatten stellen, aber wir verlangen auch unseren Platz an der Sonne." After: Pulzer, P G J: "German History from Bismarck to the Present". In: *Germany*. Ed: Pasley, Malcolm, London 1972, p 295.
- 77 Farga, Franz: "Romain Rolland", p 34.
- 78 Grautoff, Otto: "Romain Rolland". In: *Straßburger Post*, no 940, 21 August 1913, morning edition. Grautoff's emphasis.
- 79 See note 42.
- 80 Grautoff, Otto: "Romain Rolland". In: *Der Bund*, 11 June 1913, Feuilleton.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Zweig, Stefan: "Brief an Romain Rolland". In: *Berliner Tageblatt*, vol XLI, no 651, 22 December 1912, (erstes Beiblatt).
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 *CRR II*, p 137. Letter dated 30 April 1901.
- 86 *CRR I*, p 286. Letter dated 3 December 1900.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Stadler, Ernst: "Romain Rolland: *Jean-Christophe*", p 171.

- 89 Ibid., pp 170 - 171.
- 90 Ibid., p 171.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 Stefan, Paul: "Ein französischer Musiker-Roman."
- 93 Stadler, Ernst: "Romain Rolland: *Jean-Christophe*," p 169.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Zweig, Stefan: "Brief an Romain Rolland."
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Platzhoff-Lejeune: "Romain Rolland". In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XVI, no 3, November 1913, cols 181 - 182. Taken originally from *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, nos 271 & 272.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Stegemann, Herbert: "Romain Rolland", p 2.
- 101 Stadler, Ernst: "Romain Rolland: *Jean-Christophe*", p 172.
- 102 Zweig, Stefan: "Brief an Romain Rolland."

1914 - 1918

Chapter II

ROMAIN ROLLAND AGAINST GERMANY?

Die Goeth'sche Maske des
Ehrenwächters der Zivilisation
und leidenschaftslosen Vermittlers
zwischen den Völkern ist gefallen
und vor uns steht - der gehässige
Feind.¹

By July 1914, even after the events of Sarajevo, Romain Rolland's German translator Otto Grautoff was able to inform the French writer that all was set for the continued appearance of *Jean-Christophe*, the first volume of which had been greeted with such enthusiasm by German criticism.² The Grautoffs were also preparing a translation of Rolland's second novel, *Colas Breugnon*, written in the summer of 1913. All the signs indicated that Romain Rolland could hope to enjoy the favour of German-speaking audiences for many years to come. The aftershocks of Sarajevo, however, were soon to change the European landscape beyond all recognition. Otto Grautoff nonetheless assured Rolland of his continued support and admiration in spite of the terrible events of the summer of 1914. "Le temps a changé," he wrote at the end of August, "mais mes sentiments envers vous et envers votre pays n'ont pas changé. Je n'oublierai jamais ce que je vous dois, ce que je dois à votre pays."³ How would Romain Rolland's reputation as a novelist and a man survive more generally, however, in the rather less tolerant atmosphere of war-time Germany?

We have seen that the Frenchman's reception in the German-speaking world had made Rolland's name synonymous with the desire for peace between France and Germany. Rolland's reputation amongst German critics, both in



literary critical and personal terms, was to fluctuate considerably in the 1914-1918 period, however, in particular in the first year of the War. The French writer's political essays of the War years, later collected and published under the titles *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* (1915)⁴ and *Les Précurseurs* (1919),⁵ added a new dimension to Romain Rolland's reception across the Rhine. This section will investigate the way in which Rolland's political reception shaped and influenced readings and re-readings of *Jean-Christophe* during the Great War. Let us commence with a study of Germany's reactions to Romain Rolland's politics in the opening year of the War. His essays were numerous at this time and the focus of the present work has therefore been dictated by the intensity of response provoked in the German-speaking world. As we shall see, it was to be Rolland's open letter to Gerhart Hauptmann which caused most ructions in the German camp.

In August 1914, Romain Rolland became a political writer "in spite of himself", as he tells us in the Prologue to *Quinze ans de combat*.⁶ He felt forced into that role by the contingencies of the day and by the urgent need to act. The outbreak of war found Rolland in Switzerland, a favourite summer retreat from the heat and noise of Paris. It was not, however, the purity of the mountain air which determined his decision to remain there after general mobilisation. Rolland knew that only residence on neutral territory would guarantee the intellectual independence which he sought, his objective being to "maintenir la clarté de ma vision et ma pleine liberté".⁷ This jealously guarded freedom was intended to be used by the writer to the benefit of the belligerent European nations as a whole.

Romain Rolland knew that *Jean-Christophe* had awakened expectations of his own conduct as mediator and peacemaker. The author who had stated that not even war would be sufficient to break the spiritual bonds which existed between France and Germany,⁸ had set himself an arduous task. Rolland's sense of moral integrity demanded that he match deeds with words when it mattered most:

Car je savais d' avance le rôle, le devoir qui m' était échu, dans cet entre-déchirement des deux Frères Ennemis d' Occident; et j' étais décidé à le remplir, coûte que coûte, jusqu' au bout.⁹

In the very first weeks of the war, when intellectuals of all nations were, in the main, only too happy to proclaim their unreserved and uncritical loyalty to their respective flags, Rolland chose to avoid any public statement. At the same time, he kept himself closely informed about the outrageous charges and inflammatory language which now characterised intellectual discourse, if one might term it that, on both sides of the Rhine. It devastated Rolland to observe the moral abdication of an intellectual elite in whom he had placed such faith. He had read Henri de Régnier's celebration of the Gallic cockerel poised to peck out the eyes of the German eagle with distaste, just as he had followed the historian Karl Lamprecht's offensive justification of the last stand by the Austro-German alliance against the barbarity of the Eastern hordes.¹⁰ Each side maintained that its cause was the struggle of civilisation against barbarity, freedom against tyranny, and in the light of such stubborn certainty, Rolland could see no early conclusion to the War. He confessed his sense of impotence and anger to his diary in early August 1914:

Que puis-je dire? Ils la veulent tous, cette guerre, ils sont heureux de répandre leur sang sur son autel. Je ne veux plus les plaindre. Que les destins s'accomplissent! Mais la haine n' entrera pas dans mon coeur.¹¹

From that point, Rolland's declared enemy was not to be the War as such, but one of the by-products of war, indeed one of its root causes: national and racial hatred. He vowed that hatred would never enter his own heart as he took up his crusade against the irrational desire of each side to deny the enemy camp its very claim to humanity, past, present and future. Rolland saw it as his duty to stress man's common origin in God. In a time devoid of words which transcended the partisan, Rolland took it upon himself to fulfil the role of moral guide, to become one who "par-dessus la mêlée, montre la Cité de Dieu."¹²

Romain Rolland looked to Germany for just one small public demonstration of dissent. After all, the War of 1870 had been condemned by the German socialist leader August Bebel, who publicly voiced his disapproval of the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine. He perceived no such strains from the Germany of August 1914, however, and Rolland lamented this seemingly unanimous assent to war. He only later became aware of the protests of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, whilst the satire of Karl Kraus' *Fackel* would seem to have escaped his attention.¹³ Among his readings he noted an article by Gerhart Hauptmann published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* at the end of August 1914. Hauptmann was replying to the French philosopher Henri Bergson's contention that Germany was in the process of reverting to a state of total savagery. The German dramatist reassured the world that his compatriots were not savages, but a noble people united in the struggle for freedom and human progress against the Allied forces. Rolland recorded Hauptmann's article in his diary without comment.¹⁴ Doubtless it no longer seemed remarkable to him in the climate of the day. He obviously did make a mental note, however, that Hauptmann had assumed the role of both spokesman for the German intelligentsia and defender of Germany before world opinion. And so it was to Hauptmann that Rolland was to address his first public words of the War.

On 29 August 1914 the Allied press carried reports from the Belgian front which spoke of the total destruction of the Flemish town of Louvain. Louvain boasted splendid medieval architecture, most notably the University Library dating from 1425, which contained priceless art treasures and irreplaceable original manuscripts and documents. The decision to bombard the town had apparently been taken as a reprisal against Belgian guerrilla tactics, of which the alleged use of snipers and the murder of German doctors were but two elements. Until the destruction of Louvain, Rolland's references to Germany in his *Journal des années de guerre* remained remarkably composed and balanced. This latest move by the Germans, however, caused his anger to boil over and prompted him to express utter exasperation with and condemnation of German military tactics. Rolland immediately decided to formulate a protest to Gerhart Hauptmann:

La nouvelle de la destruction de Louvain me rend malade. Quelle folie emporte ces Allemands à leur ruine morale? Chaque pas qu'ils font creuse un abîme de haine. Veulent-ils donc régner sur les décombres? Ils légitiment d'avance les pires représailles; ils précipitent la venue des Cosaques et des Jaunes. Ce crime me force à sortir de mon silence. J' écris à Gerhart Hauptmann (samedi 29 août 1914).¹⁵

Uncertain, however, that his letter would reach Hauptmann, Rolland sent copies to the *Journal de Genève* and *La Voce* in Florence. This intervention thus became a very public affair, particularly in Germany, where it was to open a fierce debate not only about the accusations contained within the letter, but also about the true nature of Rolland's relationship with Germany.

Let us first consider the open letter itself. Romain Rolland's diary entry confirms that the letter was written in haste that very day and the language of the letter is certainly not that of an impassive individual who stands above the *mêlée*. The tone that Rolland strikes is distinctly emotional and angry and his words doubtless represent a spontaneous outburst against what he quite clearly believed to be a wholly unjustifiable atrocity. In spite of claims to the contrary by certain French critics,¹⁶ Romain Rolland was writing unequivocally in defence of Belgium and of France against the German military campaign.

The open letter to Gerhart Hauptmann contained a very direct condemnation of the morality of 'New' Germany (cushioned, however, in language far too emollient for French taste) and Rolland summoned the German intelligentsia to distance itself from the country's corrupt leadership. That such an uncompromising message was not destined to find approval in Germany in August 1914 was clear and Rolland consciously sought to soften the blow. He stressed in the letter that he was anxious not to be placed on a par with some of his germanophobic compatriots. Rolland thus assured Hauptmann that he was not one of those Frenchmen who considered all Germans to be barbarians, and he acknowledged the intellectual and moral stature to which

Germany could lay legitimate claim. Rolland also expressed his gratitude to the thinkers of what he termed "la vieille Allemagne,"¹⁷ singling out Goethe's rejection of national hatred as a decisive influence in his own development. Rolland asked Hauptmann too, to consider the way in which he had always worked towards reconciliation between France and Germany:

J' ai travaillé, toute ma vie, à rapprocher les esprits de nos deux nations, et les atrocités de la guerre impie qui les met aux prises, pour la ruine de la civilisation européenne, amèneront jamais à souillir de haine mon esprit.¹⁸

Romain Rolland's intentions here are clear: he wished to establish his credibility by offering evidence of his trustworthiness to Hauptmann and other German intellectuals. Many French critics found it offensive that a compatriot should seek to woo Germany in such a way and Rolland did not escape the title of German apologist.¹⁹ Yet the credibility he sought was quite plainly intended to give added weight to the charges which were to follow. Whilst Rolland's credentials certainly did make his criticisms bite hard in Germany, it was often not in the way he had envisaged, as shall become apparent.

Rolland challenged the German intelligentsia to show that it was not enslaved to an abhorrent, despotic regime, by speaking out against the atrocities of the Belgian campaign. Rolland wanted to hear proof that the flame of German Idealism was alive in a country now seemingly dominated by Prussian militarism. He appealed to Hauptmann and to other members of the German elite to save the honour of the "German race" by distancing themselves from the crimes committed against some of the great treasures of human civilisation at Louvain and Malines:

Au nom de notre Europe, dont vous avez été jusqu'à cette heure un des plus illustres champions, - au nom de l'honneur même de votre race germanique, Gerhart Hauptmann, je vous adjure, je vous somme, vous et l'élite intellectuelle allemande où je compte tant d'amis, de protester avec la dernière énergie contre ce crime qui rejaillit sur vous.²⁰

Romain Rolland had accepted the sacrifice of human life in war; he was not, however, willing to reconcile himself to the destruction of objects of beauty and historical value. By initiating such destruction, Germany seemed to merit the title of the new European Vandals and Rolland asked of Hauptmann: "Êtes-vous les petits-fils de Goethe, ou ceux d'Attila?"²¹ That question alone was to become the single most quoted passage from the open letter and it provoked a great deal of anger and indignation in Germany.

All hope for Germany was not lost in Rolland's opinion, however. He saw three ways in which Germany might retrieve the title of civilised nation. Firstly, the Army, he said, should be forced to reserve the shameless savagery of the Belgian campaign for Germany's real enemy, France. Secondly, the German military campaign should be conducted against human beings, not works of art: "Tuez les hommes, mais respectez les oeuvres! C'est le patrimoine du genre humain."²² That demand, needless to say, left Romain Rolland wide open to attack. Whilst the intentions behind it are understandable, the formulation, nonetheless, remains very unfortunate. Finally, even if the current leadership were to ignore these two pleas, the German elite might still redeem Germany's national honour by protesting against the crimes being committed in the name of her people.

Whatever Gerhart Hauptmann's reactions to this summons might be, however, Romain Rolland steadfastly refused to lay any blame at the door of the ordinary German citizen, whom he regarded as a disabused instrument of a criminal leadership:

Quelques raisons que j'aie donc de souffrir aujourd'hui pour votre Allemagne et de juger criminels la politique allemande et les moyens qu'elle emploie, je n'en rends point responsable le peuple qui la subit et s'en fait l'aveugle instrument.²³

The suggestion that the German people were the instruments, not the advocates of this War, infuriated many in both France and Germany, for quite different reasons needless to say.

Gerhart Hauptmann's reaction to Rolland's address was perhaps predictable. For, although Hauptmann was willing to acknowledge Rolland as an essentially well-meaning commentator, he wholly rejected the pleas of the French writer to condemn Germany's conduct in the War. He offered Rolland no common ground, no prospect of mutual understanding:

"Natürlich ist alles schief, alles grundfalsch, was Sie von unserer Regierung, unserem Heer, unserem Volke sagen."²⁴ Indeed, Hauptmann despaired of ever making Rolland understand the true nature of the international situation: "Jede Mühe wird ganz gewiß vergeblich sein, Sie deutsch- und klarblickend zu machen."²⁵ The equation of "German" with "clarity of vision" is an example of both the loyalty and the arrogance of Germany's intellectuals in the first months of the War. Their counterparts in the Allied camp, it must be said, were certainly no more objective or modest.

The causes for the conflict lay, in Hauptmann's opinion, wholly with the Allies who had sought to strangle the German people. Mobilisation of the German Army against France (via Belgium) was quite simply a pre-emptive strike. Germany was, according to Hauptmann, fighting a defensive war forced upon her by the Allies, using tactics thrust upon her by the baseness of the Allied campaign. The abuse being hurled across the Rhine of "Hun" and "barbarian" was simply a desperate attempt by the defeated to blacken the name of an honourable and victorious nation:

Das Wort von den Hunnen ist von solchen Leuten geprägt, die, selber Hunnen, sich in ihren verbrecherischen Anschlägen auf das Leben eines gesunden und kerntüchtigen Volkes getäuscht sehen, weil dieses Volk einen furchtbaren Stoß noch furchtbarer zu parieren verstand.²⁶

Hauptmann believed that Rolland's patriotism had blinded him to reality and had led the French writer to make outrageous accusations against the German Army and hence the German nation. Rolland was seen to have joined the vociferous chorus of the Allied camp, where cries of German barbarity and savagery were endemic. Hauptmann thus felt no regret in assuming the

lineage proffered by Rolland of Attila's descendants, if it meant that the German people would be allowed to live in peace:

Weit besser, Sie nennen uns Söhne Attilas, machen drei Kreuze über uns und bleiben außerhalb unserer Grenzen, als daß Sie uns als den geliebten Enkeln Goethes eine empfindsame Inschrift auf das Grab unseres deutschen Namens setzen!²⁷

Gerhart Hauptmann's embrace of Attila was perhaps more an act of bravado than anything else. A number of other German-speaking critics regretted that Hauptmann had chosen to formulate his defence in such a way.²⁸ To threaten to exclude Germany, as Rolland had done, from a "garde d'honneur de la civilisation"²⁹ was indeed a wound in the side of the intelligentsia. It demonstrated how little understanding and respect Germany had accrued among her European neighbours that she might be so rapidly and thoroughly abased.

On one point at least, Gerhart Hauptmann could more readily appear to represent the party of humanity than Rolland himself: in his categorical rejection of Rolland's elevation of art over life. Hauptmann, who had three sons in active service, regretted the destruction of great art treasures, but not nearly as much as he lamented the loss of human life:

Gewiß ist es schlimm, wenn im Durcheinander des Kampfes ein unersetzlicher Rubens zu Grunde geht, aber - Rubens in Ehren! - ich gehöre zu jenen, denen die zerschossene Brust eines Menschenbruders einen weit tieferen Schmerz abnötigt.³⁰

Gerhart Hauptmann did not, however, attribute any special blame to Germany for the devastation of Belgium's towns. That type of destruction he saw as a natural feature of any war.

Although Hauptmann effectively spurned Rolland, he did appear to take Romain Rolland's protestations of friendship seriously. His interpretation of the French author's relationship with Germany is a rather curious one,

however. *Jean-Christophe*, Hauptmann avowed, had indeed secured a permanent place on German bookshelves, next to the great *Bildungsromane* of Goethe and Gottfried Keller. Whilst Rolland had spoken of his appreciation of Germany's undoubted intellectual and moral greatness, Gerhart Hauptmann alluded to the Frenchman's "German blood" and reduced France to an "adoptive homeland":

Ich weiß, daß Sie deutschen Blutes sind. Ihr schönes Buch *Johann Christof* wird unter uns Deutschen neben dem *Wilhelm Meister* und dem *Grünen Heinrich* immer lebendig sein. Frankreich wurde Ihr Adoptiv-Vaterland; darum muß Ihr Herz jetzt zerrissen, Ihr Urteil ein getrübbtes sein.³¹

As one might expect, Romain Rolland did not take kindly to this attribution of German blood, given that such a contention was in any event nonsensical. Romain Rolland's lineage was very definitely French unless, that is, if one cared to go back to the Great Invasions of the Fifth Century.³² This question of Rolland's nationality was raised many times, by both German and French critics, as we shall see later. It was a highly sensitive issue and one in which the political overtones were very strong indeed. To refer to Rolland as a German during the 1914 - 1918 War was not a matter to be taken lightly. It is impossible to know exactly how Gerhart Hauptmann had intended his comment on Rolland's "German blood" to be understood. If one were to interpret his words kindly, one might find them to be a complimentary albeit arrogant statement of affection. Others attributed a more sinister explanation to them.

In *Romain Rolland schreibt zweimal nach Deutschland*, Hans-Albert Walter saw Hauptmann's choice of language as a conscious and calculated attempt to undermine Rolland's role as mediator :

Romain Rolland wird für Deutschland annektiert ("Ich weiß, daß Sie deutschen Blutes sind") und Frankreich zu seinem "Adoptiv-Vaterland" herabgesetzt, - eine groteske Unterstellung, die Rollands Mittlerposition zwischen den Nationen suspekt machen soll.³³

Such techniques certainly were later deployed against Rolland to devastating effect, leading primarily to the destruction of his reputation in France. André Maurel for example, writing in the respected *Mercure de France* in September 1917, termed Romain Rolland "un cerveau purement allemand" asking: "Combien de temps encore Monsieur Romain Rolland restera-t-il Allemand?"³⁴ However, perhaps Walter was judging Gerhart Hauptmann's letter with the benefit of hindsight and reading intentions into these passages which were absent at the time of composition. Given a knowledge of the reputation which Rolland enjoyed in Germany before the onset of hostilities, one can see that Hauptmann was stating, certainly perhaps overstating, a commonly held belief among Rolland's German readers that this particular French author did indeed enjoy a very special relationship with Germany. Doubtless, Hauptmann's rhetorical exaggeration gave to this symbolic notion of kinship, too literal an interpretation. That is allowed in peacetime. In war-time, however, when subtlety is lost, it might have been advisable for Hauptmann to choose his words somewhat more carefully.

Romain Rolland himself gave Gerhart Hauptmann the benefit of the doubt in this matter and did not appear to question the German dramatist's integrity or motives.³⁵ Privately, he noted in his diary that he found Hauptmann's letter "fort courtoise."³⁶ Publicly, however, Rolland felt the need to make a strong denial of blood ties to Germany and he composed a second letter to Hauptmann³⁷ in which he took exception to the much practised German technique of "annexation": "Gerhart Hauptmann m'annexe à l'Allemagne, tout comme si j'étais une simple Belgique. Mais ni elle ni moi ne nous laisserons faire."³⁸ This he followed with an unequivocal refutation of German parentage: "Je n'ai pas une goutte de sang allemand."³⁹ Rolland understood Hauptmann's talk of "German blood" to be yet another example of the cultural arrogance which so characterised the German-speaking intelligentsia. Hauptmann, he said, found it impossible to believe that a Frenchman could remain more loyal to German Idealism than the dramatist himself: "Hauptmann ne peut comprendre qu'un Français soit plus fidèle que

lui au vieil idéalisme allemand, qu'écrase l'impérialisme prussien."⁴⁰ If this were untrue, he contended, let the German elite prove it.

Gerhart Hauptmann and his colleagues had little more in mind, however, than to bolster their country's war effort. In this second letter to the dramatist, Rolland continued to portray the German nation as a people betrayed this time not only by its government but also by its intellectual elite: "Pauvre Allemagne! Trahie par tes maîtres de la pensée, comme par ceux de l'action!"⁴¹ Rolland developed the concept of two opposing Germanies further, portraying a dichotomy between what he described as "la vieille Allemagne"⁴² on the one hand and Prussian militarism on the other. One could argue, as many did in Germany, that such a view was a gross oversimplification of the nation's history. This concept proved nonetheless to be very powerful, and Rolland's juxtapositioning of a real and an ideal Germany shocked her intellectual class into angry denunciations.

It finally exploded the notion that Rolland had ever praised the Germany of Wilhelm II and the *Kaiserreich*, as many earlier critics of *Jean-Christophe* had implied.

The German press embarked upon a campaign against Rolland and a barrage of articles appeared in universal condemnation of his exchange with Gerhart Hauptmann. German writers and critics returned to these letters again and again and the correspondence was obviously felt to encapsulate the very essence of the intellectual war being waged across the Rhine. Through *Jean-Christophe*, pre-war Germany had come to see in Romain Rolland an author who understood and appreciated her. The German elite which had greeted Rolland with such enthusiasm was now faced with a dilemma: how to reconcile the friend of two months past with the seemingly hostile opponent of the present?

Indeed, both the quantity and the quality of the attacks the French writer was to suffer at the hands of German criticism, shocked even Rolland himself. Having carefully followed the reception of his letters to Gerhart Hauptmann in Germany, Rolland recorded his consternation at the end of September

1914. He had not realised, he noted in his diary, that his views would be taken quite so to heart in Germany:

Les articles publiés en Allemagne contre ma lettre à Hauptmann sont si nombreux que je renonce à les mentionner. Il n'est pas un journal allemand qui n'en ait longuement parlé, une ou deux fois, et le plus souvent avec violence. Je ne pensais pas que mon opinion leur serait aussi sensible.⁴³

Rolland's intervention had clearly touched upon some very sore spots and one of the most sensitive themes of German criticism after the publication of Romain Rolland's open letter to Gerhart Hauptmann, was the notion of treachery. This betrayal was felt to occur on a number of levels. Critics often took up Hauptmann's reference to Rolland's Germanic heritage very literally, and contended that Rolland had been disloyal to his "German blood". Dr Hans Wantoch, writing in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in October 1914, expressed his sense of disbelief that an author such as Rolland, whose work, whose whole sensibility, indeed whose very name was German, could have turned so rudely against Germany:

Romain Rolland, dessen Name deutsch, dessen Fühlen deutsch und dessen Roman "Johann Christof" ein deutsches Buch ist, wirft in einem Brief an Gerhart Hauptmann die Frage auf: "Sind Sie die Enkel Goethes oder sind Sie die Enkel Attilas?"⁴⁴

Rudolf Werner of the *Rheinland Westfälische Zeitung*, was not dismayed, but rather disgusted by Romain Rolland's disloyalty to his German kinsmen, whose name he had sullied with dirt: "Schlimm genug, wenn Herr Rolland das nicht versteht, schlimm genug, wenn sein deutsches Blut so verwelscht ist, daß er seine Blutsbrüder mit Kot bewirft!"⁴⁵

Leo Sternberg expressed his intense displeasure at Rolland's letter to Hauptmann in similarly vehement tones. In the Frenchman's address, Sternberg identified a "Verblendung des Hasses, in der Sie, Maeterlinck, Bergson, Pierre Loti and Kipling nicht nachstehen, und die uns dasselbe

mitleidvolle Entsetzen einflößt, als wenn Wahnsinnige zu uns redeten."⁴⁶

The War, Leo Sternberg believed, had torn Rolland's Goethean mask from his face to unveil the enemy beneath. Romain Rolland, the pseudo-guardian of civilisation, had at last revealed himself in his true colours: "Die Goeth'sche Maske des Ehrenwächters der Zivilisation und leidenschaftslosen Vermittlers zwischen den Völkern ist gefallen und vor uns steht - der gehässige Feind."⁴⁷

Often, coupled with that sense of dismay and disgust, came expressions of regret that an author of the quality of Romain Rolland had chosen to place himself in the company of such self-declared enemies of Germany as Maeterlinck and Maurice Barrès. An unsigned article appeared in *Hochland* in November 1914 entitled "Französische Hysteriker und deutsche Dichter" which lamented the fact that Rolland, the Alsatian (sic) author, had denied his "germanisches Blut"⁴⁸ to join forces with Germany's sworn enemies in an unseemingly and desperate attack. Thus, in spite of his efforts to avoid being cited with the most celebrated *Deutschenfresser*, Rolland was forced to join their ranks. This anonymous contributor felt able to assure *Hochland's* readership, however, that Rolland's rejection of Germany was simply another example of the desperate public hysteria into which the French Nation had descended:

Daß unter den vielen Schreiern auch ein tüchtiger und ernstlicher Dichter sich befindet, ist gewiß bedauerlich, aber unvermeidlich, wenn man die Hysterie der untergehenden französischen Kultur in Betracht zieht.⁴⁹

Common to these critics is the notion that Rolland's so-called German blood had been thinned down, diluted, at the onset of the War. Here was an essentially German author who had allegedly "become" French, "französisch geworden",⁵⁰ "verwelscht."⁵¹ These accusations represent the first clumsy efforts of German criticism to come to terms with Rolland's seeming *volte-face*. That the label 'German' might have been wholly inappropriate from the outset in the case of Rolland, had only just begun to dawn in critical circles in Germany. For some, it was easier to squeeze the French author, however

uncomfortably, into the existing scheme of things, than to question the established truths of Rolland's pre-war German reception.

Romain Rolland was also deemed to be guilty of betraying the support and trust that Germany had offered him before the Great War. He was one of the authors who had drawn royalties from the nation he now referred to as the Land of the Huns, declared our anonymous contributor to *Hochland*.⁵² Indeed, had not Germany come to the rescue of a number of foreign writers whose reputations were slow to establish themselves at home, asked Dr Wantoch in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*? Was not the recognition accorded them by German-speaking audiences the very building blocks of their claim to world renown? Notably, it was Romain Rolland who headed Wantoch's list of foreign authors championed by Germany:

Deutschland hat sich der Bedrängten, der in der Heimat Verkannten angenommen, und sein Beifall hat sie in den Weltruhm erhoben: Romain Rolland, Emile Verhaeren und nicht zuletzt jener Bernard Shaw, den seine eigenen Landsleute stets nur als eine Art gelungenen Spaßvogels betrachteten.⁵³

From such a perspective, Rolland's letter to Gerhart Hauptmann must indeed have appeared disloyal and ungrateful. Germany's affection for the Frenchman had been thrown back in her face. That was both painful and humiliating and the sentiments of a number of German critics at this time resembled those of a spurned lover. Romain Rolland's "defection", however, was not simply a personal and individual affront to Germany. To some it was indicative of something far greater: the German tendency to overvalue foreign art in general and French art in particular. An article published in the *Kölnische Zeitung* in September 1914 by Herbert Eulenberg, portrayed Germany as a rejected lover, with Rolland and France as the objects of her unrequited love:

Gerade von Ihnen, Romain Rolland, und von Frankreich, das wir Deutsche seit jeher unglücklich geliebt haben, den Vorwurf der

Barbarei auf unser tapferes Heer gewälzt zu hören, das unser Land und unsere Ehre gegen vier Feinde zu behaupten hat, tut uns weh.⁵⁴

It was not only Rolland who had let Germany down; he was but one of the French elite who had chosen to trample underfoot the admiration and love proffered to him by his German counterparts. Germany might have expected a little more recognition and gratitude for the way in which she had always welcomed modern French art, wrote Eulenberg:

Wir hatten auf ein wenig Dankbarkeit seitens der geistigen Vertreter Frankreichs gerechnet, wir, die wir wie kein anderes Volk die moderne französische Malerei und Literatur aufgenommen und anerkannt haben.⁵⁵

That this gratitude was not forthcoming made Herbert Eulenberg wonder if Germany had not in fact overestimated France: "Aber vielleicht haben wir dieses schöne Land der ersten Republik, dieses Land Manets, Flauberts und Zolas [...] seit langem vollkommen überschätzt."⁵⁶ German intellectuals thus began to question the nature of their relationship with France and French art. Had they been excessively open towards the influences of their western neighbour? After all, that openness, they felt, had been rewarded more often than not with ridicule and disdain. The case of Romain Rolland was seen to highlight this dilemma.

Ferdinand Avenarius of *Der Kunstwart* was in no doubt that Germany had been guilty of elevating foreign works over those of her own creative artists. "Wir glauben, daß wir Fremdes überschätzt haben," wrote Avenarius, "wir glauben, daß es uns nur gesund ist, wenn wir uns nun auf gute Zeit hinaus auch geistig vom Fremden fernhalten - es sei denn Großes."⁵⁷ Rudolf Werner meanwhile, writing in the *Rheinland Westfälische Zeitung*, levelled uncompromising accusations at certain sections of the German intelligentsia for their gross over-indulgence, their *Fremdtümelei*,⁵⁸ as it came to be known. It was time, he said, for German culture to rid itself of the foreign vermin, of which Romain Rolland was one, feeding upon it: "Und so säubern wir jetzt auch unser Haus gründlich von allem ausländischen

Ungeziefer, das sich bei uns eingenistet hatte."⁵⁹ Surprisingly, Gerhart Hauptmann himself was not spared this critic's wrath. Werner accused Hauptmann of displaying, in his exchange with Rolland, an inherent German tendency, which he termed "der leidige deutsche Erbfehler"⁶⁰ to understand and excuse the very worst excesses of behaviour from abroad. How could Hauptmann have sought to defend the Frenchman's foul abuse, cloaked as it was in such hypocritical cant:

Befremden aber muß es, daß Hauptmanns Antwort auf jene freilich heuchlerisch überzuckerte Schandschrift außerordentlich zahm und versöhnlich ausgefallen ist. Ja, Hauptmann versucht gar noch, die Schimpfereien Rollands mit seiner französischen Eigenart zu entschuldigen.⁶¹

It was indicative of the mood in nationalist circles in Germany, in particular in the first year of the War, that not even Gerhart Hauptmann's forthright rebuff to Romain Rolland was deemed adequate. The time had come, Werner believed, for Germans to assert themselves once again both literally and metaphorically in their own native tongue: "Mit jedem, versuchen wir, in seiner Sprache zu reden. Aber zum Donnerwetter, jetzt ist's doch wohl endlich Zeit, gründlich deutsch zu reden, und zwar mit all und jedem!"⁶²

Rolland was indeed treated to a number of lessons in German clarity by critics who sought to correct what they saw as his flagrant ignorance of Germany. Waldemar Bonsels, who had given *Jean-Christophe* a rapturous welcome in the pages of the *Tägliche Rundschau* in April 1914,⁶³ was less impressed with Rolland's letter to Gerhart Hauptmann. He believed that the French writer and his compatriots had completely misunderstood the loyalty of the German people to their state. The failure to grasp the importance of shared values, of Germany's "vollkommene Hingabe an eine große Staatsidee,"⁶⁴ had resulted in Rolland's gross misjudgement of the situation in Germany at the outbreak of hostilities, Bonsels believed. It was time that Rolland understood that Germany would never have entered the War without the full consent of her people. Indeed, Waldemar Bonsels contended, Germany's involvement in the Great War did not mark the triumph of

militarism over idealism, but rather the victory of socialist ideals over the materialism of capitalism:

Die Erhebung Deutschlands zum Krieg ist kein Sieg des Militarismus über betrogene Massen gewesen, sondern es ist der unerhörte Triumph eines edlen und unverdorbenen Volks über die Vorherrschaft des Materialismus, des Großkapitals, der geistigen Verflachung, des Wohllebens in einem feigen Frieden und der törichten Duldsamkeit.⁶⁵

Far from being duped into war by an aggressive leadership, it was the German people, Bonsels assured us, who had mobilised the ruling class.

Rolland's interventions, Bonsels believed, represented a considerable threat to Germany, the most bitter and pernicious attack being precisely this notion that Prussian militarism had destroyed German idealism: "Die letzte Entgegnung Rollands enthält nun den bittersten und gefährlichsten Vorwurf, die Behauptung, daß der preußische Imperialismus den alten deutschen Idealismus mit Füßen trete."⁶⁶ Bonsels believed that such language was little more than propaganda, designed to fire the Allied war-effort, and he interpreted Rolland's letter to Hauptmann as tantamount to a curse upon Germany. History would show, however, in Bonsels' view, that Germany had always fought for, not against the human spirit as the French writer had averred:

Das junge Deutschland, siegreich oder besiegt, wird von dem Fluch Romain Rollands nicht betroffen werden, denn ein Fluch lebt nur in der Atmosphäre des Bösen fort, und wir haben nicht gegen den Menschengeist gekämpft, sondern für ihn.⁶⁷

Quite clearly, the self-criticism and appeals for moderation that Romain Rolland had been hoping to provoke in Germany were not forthcoming. Indeed, Rolland had achieved the very opposite of his intentions in many cases, spurring the German intelligentsia on to ever more uncompromising proclamations of loyalty.

Karl Wolfskehl, a young poet associated with Stefan George's review *Blätter für die Kunst*, was also to be one of those who attempted to "teach" Romain Rolland German. He took it upon himself to illustrate the chasm of misunderstanding which lay between the French word "Fatalité" and the German term "Schicksal" and hence between French and German interpretations of the War. In his first open letter, Rolland had asked Gerhart Hauptman not to see the War simply in terms of "fatality" because he believed that the invocation of fate was a feeble excuse, an alibi for the weak:

Ce n'est pas que je regarde, ainsi que vous, la guerre comme une fatalité. Un Français ne croit pas à la fatalité. La fatalité, c'est l'excuse des âmes sans volonté. La guerre est le fruit de la faiblesse des peuples et de leur stupidité.⁶⁸

Rolland, Wolfskehl said, may have been able to empathise with many aspects of German life but that comprehension stopped short of grasping the nature of Germany's involvement in the Great War. Indeed, Rolland could not hope to penetrate Germany's motives until he had understood the all important difference between "Fatalité" and its seeming German equivalent "Schicksal".

Karl Wolfskehl circumscribed the meaning of the French word "Fatalité" to a sense of inescapable doom which threatens the life of the individual. "Schicksal", he said however, was a realisation and acceptance by the individual of necessity as a formative force in the moral life of a nation, giving birth to all great and noble ideas:

[...] aber wir glauben an die Mächte, die im Willen des Menschen das Ewige gebären, sie beide eins, Willen und Mächte, eins als Notwendigkeit, als Geschehen, als sittlich formende Kraft, davon alle großen Ideen die Kinder sind, die Idee der Freiheit, die Idee des Schönen, die Idee der tragischen Pflicht.⁶⁹

How could Rolland be truly ignorant of the causes of the War, Wolfskehl asked indignantly? Was he unaware of the net that had been cast over Germany in order to throttle her? Did he not realise that Germany, the most

peaceful of nations, had turned the other cheek to every provocation meted out to her by her western and eastern neighbours for more than thirty years? Had Rolland not been so ignorant of Germany's political and diplomatic situation over the previous four decades, he would have realised that the War was indeed fate, in what Wolfskehl maintained was the specifically German sense of the word. It represented a necessity for Germany and for the whole world, a necessity forged not by any human hand but by the hand of God:

Dieser ungewollte, uns aufgezwungene Krieg ist dennoch eine Notdurft, er hat hereinbrechen müssen für Deutschland und für die Welt europäischer Menschheit, um dieser Welt willen. Wir haben ihn nicht gewollt, aber er ist von Gott.⁷⁰

Karl Wolfskehl was indignant too that Romain Rolland could attribute greater blame to Germany for what he termed the "temporary occupation of Belgium" and the unintentional destruction of certain buildings than to the Russians for their terrifying and murderous campaign in the East. The young German poet believed that Rolland was guilty of attributing blame in a grossly partisan and disproportionate manner. Why, for example, had the French writer not criticised the shameful way in which France had come to the aid of the monstrous tyranny of Russia? Germans, Wolfskehl informed Romain Rolland, were fighting not only to safeguard their continued existence as a nation but also to save the very name of France which had been so foully blackened by this pact with the Muscovite hordes: "Heute kämpfen," says Wolfskehl, "gegen Euch Verbündete der Schwärme Moskowiens, kämpfen wir Europäer auch für dies Frankreich, das Ihr bedroht, nicht wir!"⁷¹

That must, of course, have appeared a somewhat grotesque form of reasoning to the Allied camp: Germany invading France in order to save her from self-betrayal. It was, however, a popular theme of German commentators in the early months of the War. Walter Braunsels, a young conductor, also asked Rolland to try to overcome the pain he felt for his native country in order to understand that Germany was working for, not against France. This War would bring deliverance, divine redemption, liberation from the seeds of

decadence, and Braunsels did not hesitate to cast the German Army in the role of surgeon:

O könnten Sie den Schmerz um Ihr geliebtes Land so weit meistern, um zu sehen, daß wir ihm wehe tun mit dem Messer des Arztes, wahrhaftig nicht mit dem Fuß des Elefanten, daß wir kämpfen in heiliger Überzeugung, um den menschlichen Ernst.⁷²

Germany was, of course, not the only nation with a mission to "liberate". Intellectuals in the Allied camp, including to some extent Rolland himself, were also busy justifying the "liberation" of Germany from the tyranny of Wilhelm II. Such logic serves to demonstrate the relativity of human reasoning, showing how the irrefutable truths of the present can quickly become the hideous lies of history.

Romain Rolland was struck by these expressions of unerring belief in the righteousness of Germany's cause and the passion for self-sacrifice. Karl Wolfskehl provided the Frenchman with an important lesson in the psychology of the German nation at the beginning of the War. The young poet's letter, Rolland said, "fait sentir la foi patriotique et l'ardeur de sacrifice qui soulèvent la jeunesse allemande, comme la nôtre."⁷³ How bitterly he regretted that such noble qualities were being used to such monstrous ends on both sides of the Rhine.⁷⁴ Wolfskehl's intervention certainly demonstrated to Rolland the integrity and the earnestness of large sections of the German people at the beginning of the War, however misguided they appeared to him then, as they may appear to us now. Rolland was to receive countless letters written in similar vein from German friends and acquaintances, which pleaded with him to attempt to understand Germany's sense of persecution. Whilst he often doubted the lucidity of his correspondents, he felt on many occasions that their personal integrity was beyond question: "Je me frotte les yeux, je me demande si je rêve; car de la loyauté des correspondants, il est impossible de douter."⁷⁵ That sense of the absurd, the inability of man to reconcile his intentions with reality, was to remain with Rolland throughout the War and later inspired his grotesque drama, *Liluli*.

Thomas Mann came to represent for Romain Rolland a much darker side of the German intelligentsia than the poet Karl Wolfskehl, however. In "Gedanken im Kriege", published in the *Neue Rundschau* in November 1914,⁷⁶ Mann undertook to school Rolland and the Allied camp in the much misunderstood concept of German culture. We have seen how Rolland attempted to assume, admittedly with only limited success, a position of spokesman and guardian of European civilisation in his letter to Gerhart Hauptmann. He saw it as his duty to warn Germany that she risked losing her right to be called a civilised nation by actions such as the destruction of Louvain and Malines. Indeed, the Germans had added to their catalogue of "crimes against civilisation" only days after Rolland composed his address to Hauptmann, by the bombardment of Reims Cathedral. Thomas Mann sought to show the Allied camp that the term "civilised" was an inappropriate and unwelcome one: Germany had never been or aspired to be "civilised" for she possessed something far greater, *Kultur*.

Often quite wrongly used as synonyms, *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* were, in Thomas Mann's estimation, antonyms. *Zivilisation* he saw as reason, enlightenment, gentleness, morality, intellect, but also scepticism and dissolution. The concept of *Kultur* meanwhile encompassed for Mann, unity, style, form, dignity and taste. It also had its darker side, however:

Kultur kann Orakel, Magie, Päderastie, Vitzliputzli, Menschenopfer, orgiastische Kultformen, Inquisition, Autodafés, Veitstanz, Hexenprozesse, Blüte des Giftmordes und die buntesten Greuel umfassen.⁷⁷

In spite of these attributes, which one might be forgiven for considering sizeable handicaps in any contest, Thomas Mann judged *Kultur* superior to civilisation. It will not astonish us, therefore, to discover that Mann saw Germany as a representative of the former, whilst identifying France very closely with the latter.

Due to the constraints of the present work, a series of equations and antitheses must serve to illustrate the sub-structure of the philosophical system Thomas Mann creates in "Gedanken im Kriege":

France	≠	Germany
Geist	≠	Kultur
Virtuosität	≠	Kunst

The influence of Nietzsche in such a system is very clear in this essay, although needless to say, no mention is made of Nietzsche's disdain for the New Germany. Mann embraced the Nietzschean *Umwertung aller Werte*, in which civilisation is seen to be a very shallow veneer created by moral and intellectual weaklings, too puny to face life in all its beauty and mainly horror. Art, Mann contended, has never been the domain of bourgeois morality, for its visions go beyond the surface of man's rational understanding to penetrate a "tieferen, dunkleren und heißeren Welt, deren Verklärung und stilistische Bändigung wir Kultur nennen."⁷⁸ These fleeting visions of the suprahuman, of what Goethe referred to as *das Dämonische*, separate the true artist from the virtuoso.

However, Thomas Mann was not simply creating an independent philosophical system in "Gedanken im Kriege," he was using ideas to very specific historical and political ends: the legitimisation of Germany's military campaign in 1914 and the justification of Germany's war goals. Thus these intellectual concepts were given a national and racial dimension by Thomas Mann. The French, with their Revolution and Enlightenment, were intellectuals, politicians, dilettanti and civilians; the Germans meanwhile philosophers, artists and soldiers.

Not only was art more readily part of *Kultur* than civilisation, Mann contested, it was also inextricably linked to religion, sexual love and that other most primitive of forces, war. The connection between Germany's art and her militarism had not been understood or appreciated, in Thomas

Mann's view, in the Allied camp. That was why Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw and the like set Germany's artistic traditions in direct opposition to her militarism. Mann intended to demonstrate that art and war were for Germans not contradictory forces, but complementary ones. They shared many common features, the most important of which was a profound respect for organisation: "Jenes siegende kriegerische Prinzip von heute: Organisation - es ist ja das erste Prinzip, das Wesen der Kunst."⁷⁹ Moreover, both the soldier and the artist stood in opposition to the nature and morality of civilian life. Foreign commentators such as Romain Rolland had failed, according to Mann, to recognise that Germany's morality was in itself of a military nature:

Mit unserem Moralismus aber hängt unser Soldatentum seelisch zusammen, ja, während andere Kulturen bis ins Feinste, bis in die Kunst hinein die Tendenz zeigen, völlig die Gestalt der zivilen Gesittung anzunehmen, ist der deutsche Militarismus in Wahrheit Form und Erscheinung der deutschen Moralität.⁸⁰

A nation proves itself first and foremost by its ability to endure war, and Germany was in the process of providing just such proof: "Deutschlands ganze Tugend und Schönheit - wir sahen es jetzt - entfaltet sich erst im Kriege."⁸¹

The ignorance of the Allies about the interdependency of Germany's militarism and her culture, of the great beauty of the German nation at war, had led, according to Thomas Mann, to the wild charges of barbarity emanating from the Allied camp. The German author placed Romain Rolland's interventions on exactly the same level as those of Germany's more vociferous critics. He drew no distinction between the pleas of Rolland for Germany to change her course, and violent invective of self-confessed Germanophobes. Indeed, Mann included Rolland in the group of individuals whom he held responsible for the deployment of colonial and non-white forces against Germany. With their accusations of German savagery these people had provided ideological justification for the unleashing of the world's true barbarians against Europe's most important nation state:

Man glaubt, ein Recht zu haben, auf Deutschland Kirgisen, Japaner, Gurkas und Hottentotten loszulassen, - eine Beleidigung, beispiellos, ungeheuerlich, und einzig nur möglich geworden kraft jener im stärksten Sinne des Wortes *unerlaubten* Unwissenheit über Deutschland, die aus jedem Worte der Bergson, Maeterlinck, Rolland und Richepin, der Deschanel, Pichon und Churchill, am wütesten aber aus der Tatsache der ganzen vermessenen Zettelung selber spricht. Solche Unwissenheit über das heute wichtigste Volk Europas ist nicht statthaft, sie ist strafbar und muß sich rächen.⁸²

The charge of preparing the ideological ground for the deployment of colonial troops in Europe was particularly inappropriate in the case of Romain Rolland. In his essay "Au-dessus de la Mêlée", published some weeks before "Gedanken im Kriege", Rolland had clearly outlined what he believed to be the terrible consequences of introducing non-European peoples into the conflict.⁸³ Nonetheless, impermissible ignorance characterised Rolland's reference to Germany. In questioning Germany's conduct in the Great War, Rolland thus saw himself demoted from the expert judge of German life and letters he had become in pre-war German criticism, to philistine.

After the German bombardment of Reims Cathedral, Rolland became a prominent organiser in a campaign against the destruction of art treasures, seeking public condemnations of Germany's military campaign from artists throughout the world. Thomas Mann was contemptuous of such a campaign. He defended the German military unequivocally, portraying French outrage at the destruction of Reims as both cynical and absurd:

Man macht Reims zur Festung, man stellt seine Kanonen in den Schatten des Doms, man postiert Späher auf die Türme, und wenn der Feind danach schießt, so kreischt man mit Fistelstimme: "Die Zivilisation!"⁸⁴

The most prominent of those contralto voices was, of course, Rolland whose shrieks of "civilisation" had indeed been heard over the Rhine. Thomas Mann explained to these protesters that the damage done to Reims Cathedral

was, in fact, more of a loss to the Catholic German officer who had ordered the bombardment than to the Jacobin, anti-clerical French soldiers who had consciously endangered the great building in the first instance. France was likened to the suffragettes by Mann, whom he saw as women who used violence freely whilst continuing to demand that they be treated as ladies. France had been preparing for this War for over fifty years and now she deplored the devastation she herself had unleashed:

Diese Nation nimmt Damenrechte in Anspruch, es ist kein Zweifel [...]. Man will nicht erlauben, daß wir leben; aber wenn wir mit einigem Nachdruck auf der Tatsache unseres Daseins bestehen, so legen wir einen beklagenswerten Mangel an Galanterie an den Tag.⁸⁵

When one considers that behind such ironic phrases lay the devastation of a neutral country, one can perhaps begin to understand the sense of outrage that these euphemisms provoked outside Germany.

Romain Rolland was utterly devastated by Thomas Mann's "Gedanken im Kriege" which he believed to be the most terrible example of the excesses of the German intelligentsia. This essay was to have a more profound effect upon him than the exchange with Gerhart Hauptmann and he expressed his horror both privately and publicly. In an emotive letter to Stefan Zweig, who had sent him Mann's article in the belief that it demonstrated the spiritual nobility of the German cause,⁸⁶ Rolland retorted:

Une pareille lecture serait capable, si je ne réagissais, si je ne connaissais des hommes tels que Zweig, de briser les derniers liens qui m'attachent à la pensée allemande.⁸⁷

Never would Rolland forgive or forget Thomas Mann's intellectualisation and justification of Germany's crimes:

Ce que Thomas Mann dit de la France est une honte. Jamais je ne lui pardonnerai la légèreté odieuse avec laquelle il parle des dévastations allemandes. Jamais je ne lui pardonnerai l'ironie outrageante avec laquelle cet intellectuel, assis confortablement devant sa table de

travail, raille lourdement le peuple français aux armées, qui se sacrifie avec un stoïcisme et une joie héroïques. La victoire de ce peuple répondra à de telles insultes. Mais quand je rencontrerai Thomas Mann dans vingt ans, je refuserai de lui serrer la main.⁸⁸

Romain Rolland also found strong words of condemnation for "Gedanken im Kriege" in the press. In "Les Idoles", he described Mann's essay as an "accès de délire d'orgueil et de fanatisme irrité."⁸⁹ Germany, Rolland believed, had no more sinister enemies than her own intellectuals.

No direct contacts were ever made between Thomas Mann and Rolland it would appear, although a certain mutual respect was established in the inter-war period through various intermediaries.⁹⁰ It is perhaps a measure of the lasting impression Rolland made upon the German author that he was, many years later, to feature in one of Thomas Mann's dreams. How different however, Mann's role was to be in that dream of June 1933 than in the first months of the Great War: "Nachts träumte mir, Rolland sei gestorben und ich spräche an seinem Sarge mit großem Ernst und Zorn über die deutschen Verbrechen."⁹¹ Times had changed and so had Thomas Mann. Opposition to Nazism had forged common ground. Was this an example perhaps of the sub-conscious mind righting the errors of yesteryear? Certainly one would have thought, an indication of Thomas Mann's sensitivity towards Romain Rolland's moral stature.

Such were some of the excesses of the nationalist camp. Rolland could not hope, however, for a very much more generous reception in socialist circles. The Hauptmann exchange brought expressions of strong disapproval from both Gustav Landauer, no apologist for the German state machine, and Wilhelm Herzog, a left-wing publicist and literary critic.

A very personal disappointment characterised Wilhelm Herzog's commentary in "Der Triumph des Kriegeres" which appeared in the August/September number of his journal *Das Forum*. Herzog had been closely involved with Romain Rolland's debut on the German stage in March 1914, when *Les Loups (Die Wölfe)* was presented at the Munich Kammerspiele⁹² and he had

been very close to Rolland intellectually in the pre-war days. After the Frenchman's letter to Hauptmann, however, he felt a deep sense of alienation and actually saw it as his duty to publicly denounce Rolland in Germany:

"Aber ich halte es für meine Pflicht, öffentlich gegen Sie zu zeugen."⁹³

Wilhelm Herzog believed that Rolland himself had been contaminated by the "Fluidum des Hasses und der Lüge,"⁹⁴ turning his back on truth to espouse the lies of all the other Parisian jingoists:

Es scheint, daß der Krieg die feinsten Geister nicht vertieft, sondern vergrößert und verflacht. Jedenfalls hat auch Sie wie viele die stickige Atmosphäre umnebelt, die Ihre, unsere Presse erzeugt, und Sie sprechen hemmungslos die Klischees aus, die von den Pariser Hetzblättern seit dem ersten Tage des Kriegsausbruches im Umlauf gebracht worden sind.⁹⁵

Wilhelm Herzog shared the same conviction as the vast majority of Rolland's other German critics in the first months of the war that the question "Êtes-vous les petit-fils de Goethe, ou ceux d'Attila?" was merely a rhetorical one. Rolland's letter to Hauptmann had thus alienated even socialists and members of the avant-garde such as Wilhelm Herzog.

Neither could committed socialists find any great sympathy for Romain Rolland's campaign in defence of great works of art. Landauer criticised Rolland for attacking only the side-effects of war, whilst sparing war itself: "Er wendet sich gegen Begleiterscheinungen des Krieges, die es geben wird, solange es Kriege gibt, statt gegen jeden Krieg überhaupt."⁹⁶ Indeed, could one possibly conceive of a war that was not savage and inhuman, Landauer asked? Wilhelm Herzog reminded Rolland that while the world argued about the loss of art treasures, real people were having to flee in terror from the Cossack onslaught. The loss of one of Rubens' great works was painful, Herzog agreed, but that loss should not be allowed to distract international attention from the central issue of the destruction of human life: "Hier fallen Menschenleben unerhört - und wir sollten als Ästhetiker über den Untergang eines Kunstwerkes trauern?"⁹⁷

Romain Rolland was initially unrepentant about his standpoint on this matter, however. In a later article, "Pro Aris", written after the bombardment of Reims Cathedral and in direct response to his German critics, he elaborated upon his beliefs. Yes, a great building or a great work of art was more valuable in his eyes than the life of an individual:

Une oeuvre comme Reims est beaucoup plus qu'une vie: elle est un peuple, elle est ses siècles qui frémissent comme une symphonie dans cet orgue de pierre [...]. Qui tue cette oeuvre, assassine plus qu'un homme, il assassine l'âme la plus pure d'une race.⁹⁸

Rolland maintained that his defence of European cultural heritage demonstrated the heroism and the idealism of the French cause. France he said, was fighting for the triumph of the spirit over the flesh: "C'est que nous mettons l'esprit au-dessus de la chair."⁹⁹ These words now have something of a hollow ring to them and Rolland seemed to be caught in an uncomfortable compromise between rejecting and accepting war.

Gustav Landauer was disappointed to hear Rolland express what he saw as a rather low form of chauvinism and prejudice in the exchange with Gerhart Hauptmann. Landauer found it morally reprehensible of the French author to launch an offensive on the enemy camp which was bound to be used by warmongers to incite yet more hatred and violence. Both Wilhelm Herzog and Gustav Landauer felt that it would have been more becoming of Rolland to remain silent, than to give vent to his emotions in this way. He should have assumed a quite different role and placed himself, in Landauer's opinion, above national loyalties, to embrace the party of humanity:

Das sollte Romain Rolland verstehen, der uns einen ganz andern Aufruf an die Menschheit schuldig wäre; ganz anders sollte er sich, unbeschadet seines französischen Nationalgefühls, als Angehöriger einer neuen, noch werdenden, noch namenlosen, sehr kleinen Nation fühlen, die die kommende Menschheit repräsentiert.¹⁰⁰

Romain Rolland was not, however, about to take either Landauer's or Herzog's advice to remain silent in September 1914. In the first year of the War neither the invective of the nationalist camp in Germany, nor the intellectual games of Thomas Mann, nor the great disappointment of personal friends, French and German alike, could deter Rolland from what he saw as his personal struggle against hatred. After the publication of his open letter to Gerhart Hauptmann, Rolland composed over fifteen articles about the conflict. Little trace is found of these subsequent essays in contemporary German sources, with a small number of notable exceptions.¹⁰¹ Germany had temporarily turned away from Rolland following his letter to Hauptmann. His criticisms were felt to be too partisan by some, downright malevolent by others.

Romain Rolland was finally to be silenced in July 1915, however, when he confessed his sense of frustration and impotence in the wake of an exchange with a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Giessen, Dr August Messer. Rolland had reproduced extracts from the posthumous *Feldpostbriefe* of a Dr Albert Klein, edited by Messer, in an essay entitled "Le Meurtre des Elites". These were taken from the May number of *Die Tat*¹⁰² and were used by Rolland to illustrate to a French readership the low morale of the German Army together with both the nobility of Germany's elite and the tragedy of its sacrifice. He had chosen to document the atmosphere in the enemy camp because it represented the truth, he said, and because that truth enabled him to ascertain just how guilty Germany's leaders were:

"Pourquoi publier ces pages?" me demanderont quelques-uns en France [...]. Je répondrai: parce que c'est la vérité, et parce que cette vérité légitime notre jugement, le jugement de l'univers contre les chefs de l'Allemagne et contre leur politique.¹⁰³

Romain Rolland was thus seen to imply that Albert Klein's letters from the front had themselves been accusatory of Germany's stance in the War and represented a demand for redress by an elite toward a tyrannical leadership. "Du fonds des champs de bataille", Rolland wrote, "ces voix d'une minorité

sacrifiée s'élèvent comme une condamnation vengeresse des oppresseurs."¹⁰⁴ Messer was incensed and felt that it was his duty as editor and friend of the deceased, to request publicly that Rolland withdraw this contention. The judgements and conclusions which Rolland drew did not follow logically from the material under examination, Messer averred. The Giessen Professor requested that the French writer admit to having overstepped the boundaries of objectivity by attributing to Klein opinions he did not hold. He assured Rolland that Albert Klein, holder of the Iron Cross, had always expressed a profound loyalty to Germany's cause, and he accused Rolland of attempting to endear the French people to Germany under false and dangerous pretences. The Frenchman was guilty of interpreting Klein's reconciliatory message as a sign of weakness and dissatisfaction:

Wie kann man noch seine Stimme zur Verständigung und Versöhnung erheben, wenn man befürchten muß, daß Worte, die dem Frieden dienen wollen, dazu benützt werden, weiter die Kriegslust aufzupeitschen, indem man sie etwa als Äußerungen der Schwäche oder der Unzufriedenheit beim Gegner interpretiert.¹⁰⁵

Such misinterpretations, August Messer believed, were the source of further deep mistrust between the enemy nations and, if anything, would prolong rather than shorten the War.

Romain Rolland was in turn infuriated by Messer's demand for a public statement of Klein's loyalty to Germany. He felt that it undid all of his efforts to lessen the hatred of Germany felt by his compatriots.¹⁰⁶ This controversy of July 1915 came at a time when the campaign in France against Rolland also reached its height. *Le Temps* of 7 July 1915 accused Rolland of being a member of a German organisation, the pacifist *Bund neues Vaterland*, with which he had a number of contacts.¹⁰⁷ The French press refused to publish the writer's denial of membership and a merciless campaign was waged against him, orchestrated by Paul-Hyacinth Loyson. Henri Massis' tract, *Romain Rolland contre la France*, also appeared in July 1915, labelling Rolland an indecent and miserable apologist of Germany.

In a letter addressed to the director of the Swiss journal the *Internationale Rundschau* in July 1915, Rolland declared the bankruptcy of his tactics. All his efforts to encourage moderation and mutual understanding had failed both at home and in Germany, and although he did not regret his stance, he said, he could see no sense in treading the same fruitless path: "Chacun de mes articles m'a valu d'être outragé dans chacun des pays. Des deux côtés, je me suis heurté à la même incompréhension. Les outrages ne m'arrêtent pas; mais l'incompréhension, à la fin, me désarme..."¹⁰⁸ Rolland thus retreated from the insanity which surrounded him to the one unsullied asylum which remained open to him, his art.

August Messer was, for his part, somewhat surprised by the vehement reaction his demand for objectivity had provoked, particularly since he was unaware of the campaign in the French press against Rolland. Messer asked Rolland to think again about their exchange, this time less emotionally and with greater objectivity:

Wenn Herr Rolland sich wirklich für einige Zeit vom Kampfplatz zurückzieht, so möge er in Ruhe auch noch einmal über unsere Kontroverse nachdenken: er wird dann wohl zu der Einsicht kommen, daß er bei seinem löblichen Bemühen, Mißverständnisse zu beseitigen, doch nicht vorurteilslos und gründlich genug verfahren ist, und daß sein Temperament zu Klagen und Vorwürfen fortgerissen hat, zu denen ihm meine sachliche Beweisführung keinerlei objektive Berechtigung gab.¹⁰⁹

Romain Rolland did indeed subject his interventions of early in the War to rigorous self-criticism, and later came to some of the same conclusions as Gustav Landauer. Upon re-reading *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* in 1931 he reflected upon his desire to make the War more humane and admitted that such a campaign was destined to failure from the outset: "Je n'avais pas encore réalisé par l'expérience l'incompatibilité des deux termes: guerre, et quoi que ce fût d'humain."¹¹⁰ Rolland also conceded that he had "sinned" in many of his early essays against his own goal of remaining above the *mêlée*, by a very clear partiality towards France: "En tout cas, c'est un fait que ces

articles pèchent évidemment par leur partialité en faveur de la France."¹¹¹ He had desperately wanted to see France victorious. As the War continued, Rolland came to believe that patriotism and a love of humanity were irreconcilable concepts and that he would be forced to abandon one of them along the route.

Au-dessus de la Mêlée was never published in Germany, although a German version eventually appeared as part of *Der freie Geist* in Zurich (Büchergilde Gutenberg, 1952). It remained controversial even for German-speaking admirers of the author, in particular for those within Germany itself. Rolland himself lived in the hope that the German people would come to an understanding of his criticisms as the act of a "vrai et rude ami."¹¹² That recognition was certainly not forthcoming, however, in the early months of the War when his interventions were considered to show how little Rolland had understood Germany. "Und doch sieht man mit Schmerz," wrote one otherwise sympathetic critic in 1915, "wie wenig Rolland deutsches Wesen wirklich versteht und wie sehr er noch im Banne gewisser Vorstellungen ist."¹¹³

Romain Rolland, through his early wartime essays, was thus to see his initial reputation as diplomat and moral leader in tatters only months later. This friend and admirer of Germany, as his early German critics believed, had become her enemy at best through unwitting ignorance, at worst through malice. Much of this controversy stemmed from the failure to recognise or accept Rolland's notion of two Germanies. Even Otto Grautoff, his translator, who had expressed such faith in Romain Rolland in July 1914 now abandoned him:

Romain Rolland, je vous accuse de trahir l'esprit de votre race, votre esprit, votre coeur, si vous continuez à vous taire en ce qui concerne la conduite de votre pays.¹¹⁴

In the next chapter, we shall investigate the way in which such judgements of Romain Rolland's political interventions were to influence the literary reception of *Jean-Christophe*.

Notes

- 1 Sternberg, Leo: *Die Maske herunter! Eine Antwort auf den offenen Brief Romain Rollands*. Verlag "Die Lese" GmbH, Stuttgart 1915, p 3.
- 2 Unpublished letter dated 1 July 1914. FRR Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
- 3 Unpublished letter dated 28 August 1914. FRR Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
- 4 Rolland, Romain: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*. Société d'Editions Littéraires et Artistiques, Librairie Paul Ollendorff, Paris 1915.
- 5 Rolland, Romain: *Les Précurseurs*. Editions de l'Humanité, Paris, 1919.
- 6 Rolland, Romain: *Quinze ans de combat (1919-1934)*. Les Editions Rieder, Paris 1935, p.v.
- 7 Unpublished manuscript, IIB, Cahier 30, fol. 5-7. Fonds Romain Rolland held at the University Library, Basel. After: Stelling-Michaud, Sven: "Le Choix de Romain Rolland en 1914." In: *La Pensée*, no 132, April 1967, p 26. Stelling-Michaud made the very pertinent point that these documents prove beyond any doubt that it was a conscious decision on Rolland's part to remain in Switzerland after the outbreak of the War. Many of his friends were reluctant to admit or accept this, preferring to attribute his presence there as matter of chance or destiny: "Je n'accepte donc pas l'excuse de certains de mes amis qui disent que c'est le hasard qui m'a bloqué en Suisse. Le hasard a pu me faire venir en Suisse, avant les événements. Mais ma volonté seule m'y a maintenu." (pp 26-27). It is regrettable that the editors of Rolland's *Journal des années de guerre* would seem to have espoused the very reluctance which Rolland here so categorically rejected, by not publishing the first pages of the diary in which he made his position clear.
- 8 Rolland, Romain: *Jean-Christophe*. Albin Michel, Paris 1931, vol III, p 455. "Vienne la guerre! Elle ne rompra point l'étreinte de nos mains et l'essor de nos génies fraternels."

- 9 Unpublished manuscript. See note 7.
- 10 Rolland, Romain: *Journal des années de guerre 1914-1918*. Notes et documents pour servir à l'histoire morale de l'Europe de ce temps. Ed. Marie Romain Rolland; preface by Louis Martin-Chauffier. (Hereafter cited at *JAG*) - Albin Michel, Paris 1952, p 39.
- 11 Ibid, p 37.
- 12 Ibid, p 38.
- 13 Ibid, p 33. No mention is made of Karl Kraus in *JAG*. For an example of Kraus' acerbic reaction to the War, see: "In dieser großen Zeit." In: Wollschläger, Hans (ed): *Das Karl Kraus Lesebuch*. Diogenes, Zurich 1980, pp 213 - 227.
- 14 Ibid, p 41.
- 15 Ibid, p 43.
- 16 Numerous French critics accused Romain Rolland of failing to distinguish between the executioner and his victim. For a full account of Rolland's reception during the Great War in France, see: Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle*, Chapter Three.
- 17 Rolland, Romain: "Lettre ouverte à Gerhart Hauptmann." In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 5. First published 1 September 1914 in the *Journal de Genève*.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Massis, Henri: *Romain Rolland contre la France*. H Floury, Paris 1915, p 13.
- 20 Rolland, Romain: "Lettre ouverte à Gerhart Hauptmann." In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 7.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Hauptmann, Gerhart: "Antwort Gerhart Hauptmanns." In: "Romain Rolland, Gerhart Hauptmann und unser Krieg". *Frankfurter Zeitung*, vol LIX, no 253, 12 September 1914, p 1. First published in: *Vossische Zeitung*, 10 September 1914.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Even one of Romain Rolland's most vociferous critics, Rudolf Werner, categorically rejected the title of Attila's descendants: "Die Enkel Goethes sind wir! Die Enkel des Goethes, der gleich seinem Vater fritzisch gesinnt war [...]" From: "Ein deutscher Denkzettel an Herrn Romain Rolland." In: *Rheinland Westfälische Zeitung*, no 1123, 1914.

29 Rolland, Romain: "Lettre ouverte à Gerhart Hauptmann." in: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 7.

30 Hauptmann, Gerhart: "Antwort Gerhart Hauptmanns." In: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 12 September 1914, p 1.

31 Ibid.

32 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 50.

33 Walter, Hans-Albert: *Romain Rolland schreibt zweimal nach Deutschland 1914, 1933*. Friedenauer Presse, Berlin 1967, p 8.

34 Maurel, André: "Un écrivain de la guerre: M Romain Rolland." In: *Mercure de France*, 1 September 1917, p 19.

35 In a letter to Stefan Zweig dated 10 October 1914, Romain Rolland regretted that Europe's enemied intellectuals and writers had not been able to meet on neutral territory, in order to dispel some of the outrageous lies and hateful propaganda of the War. He did not hesitate to include Gerhart

Hauptmann in the group of individuals he had in mind for such a task. See: Rolland, Romain; Zweig, Stefan: *Briefwechsel 1910-1940*, vol I 1910-1923, Rütten & Loening, Berlin 1987, p 74.

36 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 53.

37 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 50. This second letter dated 13 September 1914 was again addressed to Gerhart Hauptmann through the pages of the *Journal de Genève*. It was translated and re-printed in: *Das literarische Echo*, vol 17 (October 1914-October 1915), cols 187-188.

38 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 50.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Rolland, Romain; "Lettre ouverte à Gerhart Hauptmann." In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 5.

43 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 64.

44 Wantoch, Hans: "Werdet nicht wie jene!" In: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, no 289, 18 October 1914.

45 Werner, Rudolf: "Ein deutscher Denkwort an Herrn Romain Rolland." In: *Rheinland Westfälische Zeitung*, no 1123, 1914.

46 Sternberg, Leo: *Die Maske herunter!*, p 5. See note 1 above.

47 Ibid., p 3.

48 Anon: "Französische Hysteriker und deutsche Dichter." In: *Hochland*, vol XII, no 2, November 1914, p 241.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

- 51 Werner, Rudolf: "Ein deutscher Denkmäler an Herrn Romain Rolland." See note 45.
- 52 Anon: "Französische Hysteriker und deutsche Dichter." See note 48.
- 53 Wantoch, Hans: "Werdet nicht wie jene!" See note 44.
- 54 Eulenberg, Herbert: "Antwort an Romain Rolland." In: *Kölnische Zeitung*, 17 September 1914.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Avenarius, Ferdinand; "Parlamentäre der Unbewaffneten? An Romain Rolland." In: *Der Kunstwart*, vol XXVIII, no 2, July 1915, p 44.
- 58 Wantoch, Hans: "Werdet nicht wie jene!" See note 44.
- 59 Werner, Rudolf: "Ein deutscher Denkmäler an Romain Rolland". See note 45.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid. "Deutsch" here also doubtless refers to the notion of clarity. There is a linguistic link between "deutsch" und "deutlich" upon which the author clearly plays.
- 63 Bonsels, Waldemar: *Das junge Deutschland und der große Krieg*. Aus Anlaß des Briefwechsels Romain Rollands mit Gerhart Hauptmann über den Krieg und die Kultur. Verlag Walter Schmidkunz, Munich and Vienna 1914. Bonsels reprints his review pp 14-17.
- 64 Ibid, p 29.
- 65 Ibid, p 6.

- 66 Ibid, p 27.
- 67 Ibid, p 24.
- 68 Rolland, Romain: "Lettre ouverte à Gerhart Hauptmann." In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 6.
- 69 Wolfskehl, Karl: "Karl Wolfskehl." In: "Romain Rolland, Gerhart Hauptmann und unser Krieg." From: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 12 September 1914, pp 1-2.
- 70 Ibid, p 2.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Braunsels, Walter: "Romain Rolland und die Musik." In: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, vol LIX, no 265, 24 September 1914, p 2.
- 73 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 53.
- 74 Rolland asked the elder statesmen of each nation the bitter question: "Cette jeunesse avide de se sacrifier, quel but avez vous offert à son dévouement magnanime?" Quoted from: "Au-dessus de la Mêlée". In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 24.
- 75 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 67.
- 76 Mann, Thomas: "Gedanken im Kriege". In: *Die neue Rundschau*, vol XXV, no 11, November 1914, pp 1471-1484.
- 77 Ibid, p 1471.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Ibid, p 1473.
- 80 Ibid, p 1478.
- 81 Ibid, p 1479.

82 Ibid, p 1483. Author's emphasis.

83 See: Rolland, Romain: "Au dessus de la Mêlée". In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 24. Rolland depicted the grotesque spectacle of the three great guardians of world civilisation, France, Germany and England, at one another's throats, battling for supremacy with the aid of "les barbares du pôle et ceux de l'équateur". This could only lead to the ruination of Europe as a whole, he believed.

84 Mann, Thomas: "Gedanken im Kriege." In: *Die neue Rundschau*, November 1914, p 1481.

85 Ibid.

86 "Tel était l'incroyable aveuglement des meilleurs," commented Rolland. *Quinze ans de combat*, p 159.

87 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 135.

88 Ibid., p 136.

89 Rolland, Romain: "Les Idoles". In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 90. First published September 1914.

90 Mann Thomas: *Tagebücher 1918-1921*. Ed. Peter de Mendelsohn. S Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1979, p 541. In an entry dated 28 July 1921, Thomas Mann noted the following letter from the literary critic and friend of Romain Rolland's, Robert Curtius: "Curtius teilt mir betreffende Passage aus einem Brief von Rolland mit: 'J'admire Thomas Mann, et je ne voudrais pas qu'il y eût de doute.' Also eine direkt Botschaft."

91 Mann, Thomas: *Tagebücher 1933-1934*. Ed. Peter de Mendelsohn. S Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1977, p 114. Entry dated 17 June 1933.

92 Wilhelm Herzog was one of the chief promoters of Romain Rolland's dramas in the pre-war era in Germany. *Die Wölfe* was performed on 14 and 15 March 1914.

- 93 Herzog, Wilhelm: "Der Triumph des Krieges. Sind wir Söhne Attilas? Antwort an Romain Rolland." In: *Das Forum*, vol I, no 5/6, August/September 1914, p 262.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Ibid, p 260.
- 96 Landauer, Gustav: "An Romain Rolland." In: *Die Schaubühne*, vol X, 24 September 1914, p 197.
- 97 Herzog, Wilhelm: "Der Triumph des Krieges." In: *Das Forum*, p 262.
- 98 Rolland, Romain: "Pro Aris." In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 10.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Landauer, Gustav: "An Romain Rolland.", p 198.
- 101 Wilhelm Herzog published extracts from "Au-dessus de la Mêlée" in *Das Forum* in October 1914 under the title *Dokumente der Liebe*. Gustav Landauer translated Rolland's "Appel à la jeunesse héroïque d'Europe" in the summer of 1915 for the journal *Sozialist*.
- 102 Klein, Albert: "Gedanken im Felde." In: *Die Tat*, vol VII, no 2, May 1915, pp 150 - 158. Note the title with its obvious allusion to Mann's "Gedanken im Kriege." Klein was rather more critical of the War than Mann, but then he was not writing about it from behind a desk, but from the front.
- 103 Rolland, Romain: "Le Meurtre des Elites." In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 149. First published in 14 June 1915 in the *Journal de Genève*.
- 104 Ibid, p 150.
- 105 Messer, August: "Eine notwendige Voraussetzung aller Verständigung." In: *Internationale Rundschau*, vol I, no 3, 20 July 1915, p 158.

106 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, pp 439 - 443. Rolland referred to Messer as "cet imbécile de professeur" (p 441) and wrote: "Le malheureux! Il ruine d'un mot tous mes efforts et l'estime même que j'avais pu attirer à son ami." (p 440).

107 See: Cheval, René: *Romain Rolland*, p 446.

108 Rolland, Romain: "Ein Brief von Romain Rolland." In: *Internationale Rundschau*, vol I, no 3, 20 July 1915, pp 158 - 160. Quotation taken from the original French in *JAG*, p 442.

109 Messer, August: "Romain Rollands Antwort." In: *Die Tat*, vol 7, no 6, September 1915, pp 518 - 519.

110 Rolland, Romain: *Quinze ans de combat*, p 154.

111 Ibid, p 159.

112 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 65.

113 Kammerer: "Romain Rolland. Ein Bericht." In: *Die Christliche Welt*, vol XXIX, no 21, 1915, col 427.

114 Unpublished letter dated 16 March 1915. FRR Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. This was the beginning of a long and bitter feud between Romain Rolland and his German translator.

Chapter III

SOME WARTIME RE-READINGS OF *JEAN-CHRISTOPHE*

Comme s'il appartenait
à un Français de dire
ce qui est Allemand.¹

In the wake of his exchange with Gerhart Hauptmann, Romain Rolland was overwhelmingly judged to have been guilty of misunderstanding, indeed defaming the German national character and the German nation. That a Frenchman should fail to comprehend his Teutonic neighbour was in itself seen as unremarkable; that Rolland should labour under such glaring misconceptions was, however, seen to be of considerable significance. The French author became a litmus test for German literary and political commentators and the shock of his entry into the political arena with the Hauptmann exchange, prompted the desire to re-examine Rolland's pre-war literary production.

In some nationalist circles, Rolland became a measure of how little a Frenchman could ever hope to understand Germany or her people. Beda Prillip, essentially an admirer of *Jean-Christophe*, was reluctantly forced to conclude in the *Hochland-Echo* of January 1915 that Rolland had hopelessly failed to penetrate the essence of the German soul: "Nichts wußte Rolland von den Kraftquellen deutschen Wesens [...] Deshalb überrascht ihn nun das gewappnete Deutschland, das sich wie ein Mann erhebt, als glühe nur ein Gedanke in seinen Millionenheeren."² This acid test was, of course, largely a political one. One was deemed to have understood Germany if one approved of the role she had elected to play in the Great War. By this crude yardstick, it seemed quite logical to conclude that since Rolland had not understood Germany at war, he could not have understood Germany in

peace-time either. This reasoning prompted a number of re-readings of Rolland's pre-war writings, and in particular of *Jean-Christophe*, which shall be examined in this chapter.

The first four volumes of the novel had, as we remember, been published in the Spring of 1914. This represented the first of three parts and dealt with Jean-Christophe's childhood, adolescence and early manhood in Germany. The French novel was thus felt to relate to Germany in a very direct manner and German critics began to address the question of just how accurately and fairly Romain Rolland had portrayed their country and culture. This chapter will examine the case made against *Jean-Christophe* by German critics of the War years. It is not intended to suggest that readings of the novel were solely negative during this time, as the subsequent chapter will show. Proscriptive critiques did, however, predominate in the first year of the War.

These protests against *Jean-Christophe* were certainly exacerbated by the fact that only volumes I to IV were available in German translation until 1917. The volume to cause most offence was *La Révolte* which saw Jean-Christophe fundamentally rebel against his country and its traditions. From contemporary, unpublished correspondence it is possible to see that Otto and Erna Grautoff, Romain Rolland's German translators, had plans to rectify what they saw as a considerable disadvantage to the reception of *Jean-Christophe* in Germany during the War.³ Recognising the damaging effect of *La Révolte* when read in isolation, they decided to serialise the counterpart to this volume, *La Foire sur la Place*, in which Rolland denounces the corruption and superficiality of Parisian life. Romain Rolland was furious, however, at such a suggestion. He had already ruptured all friendly relations with the Grautoffs in March 1915, when Otto had accused him of betraying his own integrity.⁴ In December 1915, Rolland threatened legal action against any attempts to reproduce passages from *La Foire sur la Place* in Germany. The potential propaganda value of the volume, read in isolation from the complete work, would doubtless have been considerable at this time. For his part, Rolland was in no mind to be paraded in Germany as the Frenchman who denounced his own people. He preferred to run the risk of

being damned by the German public. In any event, the "antidote" to *La Révolte*, *La Foire sur la Place*, did not become available in German until the publication of the second tome in 1917.

Even the availability of Parts Two and Three of *Jean-Christophe* in German, however, by no means silenced all of Rolland's German critics. Karl Toth was still to publish a twenty-page tirade against the novel in the *Deutsche Rundschau* in January 1918.⁵ The case against Rolland in his treatment of Germany was not, therefore, limited to *La Révolte*. We shall examine the underlying cause for unhappiness with the novel in Germany later in this chapter. Let us first consider the hostility of German wartime critics, not toward *Jean-Christophe* itself, but toward their pre-war colleagues.

In December 1914, S D Gallwitz published an article in *Die Hilfe* which called upon the German readership of *Jean-Christophe* to reconsider its position with regard to the novel and its author. Gallwitz was thus to become one of the first German critics to challenge the dominant pre-war literary consensus that Romain Rolland not only enjoyed a deep understanding of Germany but that the Frenchman had translated that understanding with empathy and love into his novel *Jean-Christophe*. This marked the beginning of an important new debate in Germany over the portrayal of the nation and her people by Rolland. It is a debate which concentrated on the ideological content of the novel and which sought to decode tendentious messages and judgements, of which critics such as Gallwitz were to detect many.

Gallwitz began his argument by reviewing both the general intellectual mood of pre-war Germany and the standing which Rolland in particular enjoyed at that time. He too recorded the bitter disappointment of intellectual circles in Germany upon the publication of Rolland's letter to Gerhart Hauptmann, believing that Rolland had not only bruised his own reputation in that painful exchange, but destroyed the very foundations of a powerful German dream: that of spiritual brotherhood with France. The impulse towards intellectual harmony with other cultural traditions, in particular the French, had led

German artists and critics alike to take an often exaggerated interest in foreign art, Gallwitz contended:

Dieser unser Traum [...] war auch zu einem großen Teil der Erreger unserer oft mit Recht getadelten übertriebenen Ausländerei, unserer hemmungslosen Hingabe an die Erscheinungen französischer Kunst, Literatur, Philosophie.⁶

The use of the first person plural is interesting. It would appear that Gallwitz himself had once fallen prey to this German dream. Yet he also shared the belief with Rudolf Werner and Herbert Eulenberg that this interest in French art had been perverted into a form of unconditional worship, bordering on fetishism.⁷ German literary circles had just been preparing to establish a new cult in honour of Romain Rolland, when war broke out. However, Gallwitz believed that the Hauptmann exchange could now leave nobody in any doubt as to the true nature of Rolland's relationship with Germany, for it represented a declaration not only of open hostility to Germany for her part in the Great War, but an attack on the German spirit itself. He sought to understand the nature of Rolland's seeming *volte-face*. The answer he found to lie less with the French author than with his pre-war German reception.

Romain Rolland, more than any other French artist, had been seen in Germany as the most promising prospect for mutually beneficial, Franco-German cultural links in the pre-war period. This belief was founded in the main upon *Jean-Christophe*, which seemed to guarantee the interest of the French intelligentsia in cultural and political *rapprochement*. Yet that conviction was wholly misplaced, Gallwitz told his readership, representing little more than the wishful thinking of deluded zealots. German critics were guilty of projecting their hopes and expectations into the novel, irrespective of the true nature of the work itself: "was wir hofften, hatten wir zu leicht nur geglaubt, und die begeisterten Rollandverehrer trugen diesen Sinn ohne weiteres dem genannten Roman entgegen."⁸

It was Gallwitz' conviction that the novel, so widely hailed by his colleagues as the greatest and most perceptive piece of writing on Germany since Mme

de Stael's *De l'Allemagne*, was in fact a distortion, a misrepresentation, indeed a defamation of the reality of modern Germany. He further believed that since *Jean-Christophe* was now available in translation, many a former German admirer would be shocked to hear, in his own native tongue, the tone that Rolland strikes in the description and judgement of German life. For it was essentially none other than that of his open letter to Gerhart Hauptmann:

Ich glaube, daß manchem der vorher entzückt gewesenen Leser sich jetzt dem unmittelbaren Ausdruck der Muttersprache gegenüber das Ohr schärfen wird für den Ton, aus dem Rollands Verständnis und Wertung deutschen Wesens geht, und daß es heute nicht mehr nur die ganz wenigen sein werden, die die Gleichheit der Tonart im *Jean-Christophe* wie im Hauptmannbrief erkennen.⁹

The invitation to re-read *Jean-Christophe* in the light of Rolland's exchange with Gerhart Hauptmann is formulated here very clearly. It was an example of the attempt to politicise the literary debate in Germany in the early war years. The exposition of Rolland's political views in his letter to Hauptmann, Gallwitz implied, would help the German reader of *Jean-Christophe* to identify the ideological content of the novel with greater clarity and confidence. This critic for one was convinced that his fellow-countrymen would be forced to conclude, much as he had done, that Romain Rolland's treatment of Germany was undeserving of their tolerance and admiration: "Alles, was deutsche Art behandelt in dem Roman, kann unsere Schätzung nicht gewinnen, kaum unsere Duldung [...]." ¹⁰

It is interesting to note that Gallwitz in no way sought to deny the artistic merits of *Jean-Christophe* which he found to be the work of a very cultured and talented author, singling out the musical aspects of the novel for particular praise.¹¹ Yet he felt it to be his duty both as a literary critic and as a German to direct the reader's attention to some of the severe limitations of the novel, most notably in the portrayal of Germany. Why, he asked, had his colleagues so consistently failed to address this aspect of the novel? Romain Rolland's portrait of Germany had often not even provoked comment in pre-war criticism; on the contrary, Gallwitz lamented that its "grotesque

distortions" had actually found many an unconditional welcome. The time was ripe, he believed, to correct some of these reprehensible oversights and misjudgements of the past.

The Austrian Stefan Zweig was one of Rolland's early critics singled out by Gallwitz for particular scrutiny in this regard. Zweig, doubtless Rolland's most influential admirer in the pre-war German-speaking world, had sent his congratulations to the French author upon the completion of his *chef d'oeuvre* in an open letter published in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in December 1912.¹² Sections of this letter were later reproduced by the Frankfurt publishers, Rütten & Loening, to advertise the work and were widely distributed to this end. Gallwitz took exception to Zweig's reception of Romain Rolland and chose the following quotations from that very well-known address to exemplify the nature and tone of Rolland's pre-war German criticism in general. Zweig had written at that time:

Nie ist, nicht vor und nicht nach dem "furchtbaren Jahre" von einem einzelnen der Versuch geistiger Versöhnung so liebevoll, so unprogrammatisch gestaltet worden, und ich weiß in Frankreich keinen, dem die deutsche Kunst heute dankbarer zu sein hat, als Ihnen, Sie stiller Meister [...].¹³

And further:

Sie haben Frankreich und Deutschland einander gegenübergestellt, aber nicht feindlich mehr, sondern in einer so hohen Sphäre der Gerechtigkeit, wo es nur Vergleich mehr gibt und nicht mehr Kampf.¹⁴

For Gallwitz both the content and style of these statements proved objectionable. He disliked what he considered to be the subservient tone the Austrian writer chose to adopt when addressing Rolland and the self-deprecation that Zweig appeared to be advocating not only for himself but for Germany. This relationship did not seem, to the wartime commentator, to be one of critic to author, but rather disciple to godhead. "Was für hohe Worte das sind!", wrote Gallwitz, a veritable "Schale, gefüllt mit Weihrauch."¹⁵

The degree of self-effacement which Stefan Zweig was seen to practice was sad proof of the absence of national pride and self-esteem among the pre-war intellectual elite. Clearly, Gallwitz' demands for loyalty to Germany were not tempered by the fact that Zweig was an Austrian national.

Even more serious in Gallwitz' opinion, however, was the fact that Stefan Zweig and others actually welcomed the image of Germany which emerged from the pages of *Jean-Christophe*. Rolland was the first of the post-1870 generation to attempt a spiritual reconciliation with Germany, Zweig had told his readers, a truly exceptional individual who had succeeded in portraying France's traditional enemy in a just and objective fashion. That was anathema to Gallwitz, for reasons we shall discuss shortly. He believed that Romain Rolland's pre-war German admirers had been blind to the most glaring flaws and shortcomings of *Jean-Christophe*. Such admirers had abdicated all sense of pride in their national and cultural heritage and had relinquished the duty to define their own identity. Again, interestingly, no allowance was made for Zweig's Austrian background, nor for the fact that the portrait of Germany upon which Zweig focused in the novel was the mythical land of Germany's great artists. That he had chosen largely to ignore the portrait of everyday German life was the true source of irritation to Gallwitz. This subtlety was lost on Gallwitz, however, who now expressed his thanks that war had now come to return to the German world a sense of self-worth. For, he argued, it was only from a position of strength that a nation may seek to embrace other cultures, not from one of self-abnegation:

Die Tatsache, daß alle die Rollandentzückten, weit davon entfernt, bei ihren Wertungen eines der vielen offenbaren Mängel des Buches Erwähnung zu tun, ohne weiteres auch den über Deutschland handelnden Rolland in ihre Verehrung bedingungslos aufnahmen, ist der traurige Beweis eines Mangels an nationaler Basis, die uns die eiserne Jetztzeit wohl endlich unter die Füße geben wird.¹⁶

How could Stefan Zweig and others have been content to accept the images of contemporary Germany projected by Rolland in the pages of *Jean-*

Christophe, asked Gallwitz? He was willing to accept that the French author had brought a measure of good intent to the enterprise. Yet, as a German, he felt that he must reserve the right to judge whether this endeavour was successful. Zweig, together with fellow German-speaking critics of the pre-war era, had seemingly renounced their duty to evaluate the quality of Rolland's contribution to Germany's image in European literature. Whatever one felt about Rolland's motives, Gallwitz believed, the result of his labours was unsatisfactory. The Frenchman's national and personal sensibilities had not allowed him to produce an accurate and fair portrait.

Gallwitz was less reproachful of Rolland for these shortcomings than he was of those German critics who had applauded the misunderstandings and distortions contained in *Jean-Christophe* as truths:

Sollten Vorwürfe erhoben werden, so könnten sie nur jene schwer verstehenden oder national gleichgültigen deutschen Leser des *Jean-Christophe* treffen, die Rollands Mißverständnisse und Mißschilderungen ihrer eigenen Art als gelungene und sehr witzige Beobachtungen mit großem Wohlgefallen aufnahmen.¹⁷

One can see here how he was attempting to establish reactions to *Jean-Christophe* as a yardstick of German national consciousness and loyalty. Those who approved of the portrayal of Germany in the novel were guilty of either stupidity or patriotic indifference, neither of which were enviable labels, the latter being particularly unwelcome in December 1914. Gallwitz offered an invitation to the German reader to dissociate himself from those pusillanimous intellectuals who had compromised the nation's integrity. He advocated a reading of *Jean-Christophe* which re-examined the German question as posed in the novel, this time from a standpoint of national pride.

This intensely political viewpoint had a sinister side to it, in that excusing or approving Romain Rolland's depiction of Germany in *Jean-Christophe* was tantamount to being unpatriotic, even treacherous. Stefan Zweig, an Austrian Jew, was particularly vulnerable to such allegations. A fellow Austrian Jew, Arthur Schnitzler, was also to have the consequences of association with

Rolland spelt out to him even more clearly by the German nationalist press. Schnitzler enraged German nationalists in December 1914 when he appealed to Rolland to publish a letter containing his views on world literature.¹⁸ The letter was a protest against anti-Russian sentiments falsely attributed to Schnitzler. The *Deutsche Tageszeitung* did not hesitate to denounce Arthur Schnitzler's involvement with Rolland as an act of Jewish treachery:

Welche Rolle Herr Romain Rolland in dem europäischen Geisterzwist spielt, weiß Herr Arthur Schnitzler natürlich ganz genau; daß er sich trotzdem unter seine Führung und Leitung begibt, ist eine Handlungsweise, für die es eine sehr bündige, allerdings fremdländische Bezeichnung gibt. [...] Von diesem Schnitzler u. Co., die sich selbst bescheiden stets "die besten Geister" nennen, verschweigt die freundschaftlich dienende Presse ja immer, daß sie nur im geographischen Sinne deutsch sind.¹⁹

Reports which appeared in other papers, most notably *Die Post* (Berlin) and *Der Türmer* (Stuttgart), declared that the struggle would continue after the end of the Great War itself, to cleanse Germany of her internal enemies, of those who had failed her in her moment of need.²⁰ The nationalist camp was already at work identifying the enemy within. During the early part of the Great War, association with Romain Rolland, and sympathy for his work, were sufficient reasons to brand one unpatriotic in the eyes of extremists on the right of German politics.

Gallwitz was not alone, however, in condemning both Rolland's depiction of Germany and the pre-war German literary consensus to which it gave rise. Disapproval came from a number of different quarters. The essentially moderate Gerhart Heine of *Die Christliche Welt*, a journal for the Protestant community, felt compelled to draw similar conclusions to those of the more fiercely nationalistic Gallwitz.²¹ Again Heine did not record any aesthetic or literary objections to *Jean-Christophe*, on the contrary, he greeted the novel as "einen der größten Erziehungsromane der Weltliteratur."²² Yet, he reiterated the contention that pre-war critics had been wrong to accept and approve Rolland's depiction of German life and culture. Heine questioned

Stefan Zweig's judgements on the novel but he reserved his greatest criticism for Waldemar Bonsels and drew attention to an article by the latter which first appeared in the *Tägliche Rundschau* in April 1914. Bonsels had written at that time:

Es würde mich zu Einzelheiten führen, welche nicht in den Rahmen dieser Anzeige passen, wollte ich die vortreffliche Kritik und Würdigung des Charakters unseres Volkes, die aus jeder Seite sprechen, im besonderen rühmen.²³

That, Heine believed, was a gross over-simplification which bordered on the ridiculous. The critic for *Die Christliche Welt* saw in Waldemar Bonsels a German tendency to uncritical admiration and almost childlike acceptance of judgements and opinions from abroad. Heine commented ironically that Romain Rolland had forgotten to include this characteristic among his catalogue of numerous other negative German traits: "Er hat dabei noch eine Eigenschaft vergessen, nämlich die, wahllos vom Fremden sich imponieren zu lassen und auch die fremden Mängel als Delikatessen zu verschlucken."²⁴

Waldemar Bonsels, who re-printed this critique of *Jean-Christophe* in his belligerent *Das junge Deutschland und der Große Krieg* did not recognise its authorship directly. From this position of anonymity, however, he chose not to distance himself from the contents of the essay and reaffirmed its essential message: "Es tut nichts zur Sache, wer diese Kritik geschrieben hat, sicher ist, daß sie Wahres enthält und von gesichertem Anspruch zeugt."²⁵ Bonsels, who had greeted the War with cries of: "Endlich! Und noch einmal: Endlich!",²⁶ and who had been very disapproving of Rolland's letter to Gerhart Hauptmann, did not feel compelled to revise his opinion of *Jean-Christophe*. A strong sense of German nationalism did not automatically lead, it seems, to a rejection of the novel's treatment of Germany. Indeed, it would be a great over-simplification to suggest that political affiliation dictated, in any absolute fashion, the literary reception of Romain Rolland in Germany. Rolland's appeal to the most disparate of political circles offers us sufficient proof of that: Waldemar Bonsels came from a socialist tradition,

and positive readings of *Jean-Christophe* were possible even among National Socialists, as we shall see later.²⁷

In 1915 a commentator from the Jewish community, Ludwig Geiger, joined his Christian colleague Gerhart Heine, in rounding not only on *Jean-Christophe* but again on the cult following accorded to Rolland in pre-war Germany. He found the novel profoundly anti-German and wrote in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*:

Denn um es kurz zu sagen: das Buch ist durch und durch antideutsch, und es ist ein höchst bedauerliches Zeugnis unserer vor dem Kriege üblichen, ja geradezu zur Tugend erhobenen Lauheit, unserer mit allem Fremden getriebenen Abgötterei, daß man ein derartiges Werk nicht nur ins Deutsche übersetzt, sondern in alle Himmel erhoben hat.²⁸

Karl Toth of the nationalist *Deutsche Rundschau* entered the debate on *Jean-Christophe* in January 1918 with a critique which again concentrated predominantly on the ideological content of the novel. Rolland may not have been as openly hostile to Germany as many of his French *confrères* but, he cautioned, that certainly did not make him a friend. Pre-war German critics had sadly failed to comprehend this and were likened by Toth to weak parents who rejoice when their spoilt child shows a rare willingness to behave:

Es scheint, die deutsche Kritik steht hier zum zeitgenössischen französischen Schrifttum im Verhältnis von schwachen Eltern, die einem ungezogenen Buben alles durch die Finger sehen und sich vor Freude nicht lassen können, wenn der Range einmal etwas wohlgesitteter zu sein beliebt.²⁹

Let us now look in greater detail at some of those aspects of the novel which disappointed and angered. The first and most consistent allegation levelled at Rolland was that he composed the first four volumes of *Jean-Christophe*, which depict the childhood and adolescence of his hero in Germany, from a position of ignorance. Ignorance, that is, of the true social conditions and nature of German life at the turn of the century.

Rolland was seen to have created an anachronistic, superficial and on occasion quite preposterous setting for the novel in Germany. The Court with its Grand Duke, patron to Jean-Christophe, appeared completely out of place in a portrait of modern Germany, wrote both Toth³⁰ and Gallwitz,³¹ deploring the "in ihrer Art ganz unmöglichen kleinen Stadt mit einem ebenso unmöglichen kleinen Hof."³² Rolland was seen to confuse the end of the Eighteenth Century with the end of the Nineteenth Century. Toth decried this unnatural coupling of two distinctive historical periods, a fact which demonstrated to him that *Jean-Christophe* had been constructed upon the few, very superficial impressions the Frenchman had gathered from his travels and principally "aus dem Schrifttum vor 1870 angelesen und aufspekuliert."³³

Rolland's helplessness in trying to capture the reality of Germany is exemplified repeatedly in many peripheral details, these critics contended: the most unlikely names of Melanie and Lydie are given to German country girls, for example, and the allemanic diminutive of "Cher Christli" is put into the mouth of a *Rheinländer*.³⁴ Gerhard Heine also drew attention to Romain Rolland's suggestion that all Germans have an uncontrollable desire to chatter loudly: "Mir ist das Bedürfnis, 'geräuschvoll zu reden' bei den niederdeutschen Bauern noch nicht aufgefallen,"³⁵ he commented with irony. This was, for him, one of many examples of how Rolland had elevated single observations into national characteristics. The superficiality of such a practice, according to Toth, gave the German reader the impression of walking over thin ice: "Kein Wunder, daß den deutschen Leser die vier Bände lang, darin der Held sich mit dem deutschen Leben herumbalgt, das erbärmliche Gefühl nicht verlassen will, als ging's über zu dünnes Eis."³⁶

A painful ignorance about Germany now characterised *Jean-Christophe* for these wartime critics, with Gallwitz speaking of a "Verkennung und Mißachtung deutschen Lebens und deutscher Verhältnisse, daß man geneigt ist zu fragen, ob denn sein Verfasser überhaupt jemals anders als auf der Durchreise dieseits des Rheines sich aufgehalten haben kann."³⁷ Yet, as we recall, Hermann Bahr had suggested that the name Romain Rolland had to be

a pseudonym for a German author.³⁸ *Jean-Christophe*, he implied, was the work of one who knew Germany as intimately as any native, although it has to be remembered that Bahr himself was no native of Germany. Again the confusion surfaced over the ambiguity of the relationship between *Deutschtum* and *Deutschland*. It is not however made explicit here by Bahr. Nonetheless, between native understanding and painful ignorance lies, one might have thought, an almost unbridgeable chasm. How is one to reconcile such extremes of opinion with one and the same novel?

The reality of Rolland's familiarity with Germany lies somewhere between these two poles. In *Romain Rolland, la France, l'Allemagne et la Guerre*, René Cheval documents Rolland's journeys to Germany in some detail.³⁹ The French author visited Germany on several occasions between 1887 and 1906, the year of his last visit before the Great War, spending something less than five months in the country in total. That time certainly did not bestow upon Rolland the assured intimacy, approaching native understanding which Hermann Bahr had been so eager to grant him. Indeed, Rolland was among the first to recognise the limitations of his knowledge of Germany.⁴⁰ Yet the contention that the Frenchman had no more understanding of the country than that gleaned by one in transit, was likewise untrue.

We are not arguing here, however, about the reality of Rolland's acquaintance with Germany, but rather about the critical perception of the degree of familiarity he achieved. It is, of course, impossible to account for the subjective bias of either camp in any absolute fashion. In a novel spanning ten volumes, composed over two decades, the scope for divergent readings must be acknowledged. The breadth of the work certainly allowed for a great selectivity in its reception. Dominant readings of *Jean-Christophe* in pre-war Germany had emphasised its idealistic philosophy, the portrayal of the epic struggle of the great German individual towards self-realisation. Perhaps too, it was easier for Austrians such as Hermann Bahr and Stefan Zweig to pass over inaccuracies or statements of bias in the portrait of contemporary Germany as incidental, since their major concern was Rolland's relationship to German culture not to Germany. Yet, even among

Romain Rolland's pre-war critics who counted themselves as citizens of Germany, there existed a general consensus that *Jean-Christophe* encapsulated a vision of the country that went beyond the realities of the day. War, however, brought a great sensitivity to the image attributed to contemporary Germany. *Jean-Christophe* was thus judged by ever more exacting, not literary, but historical and political standards, and readings focused upon any identifiable statements of political or nationalist ideology. Those who went in search of such readings found abundant ammunition for their case.

Ignorance of Germany was then the first accusation levelled at Rolland; ill-will and arrogance were to form the basis of the second and more serious allegation. Some German critics of the war years suggested that an arrogance and malice arose out of the urge on Rolland's part to exalt France and debase Germany. "Aber die ganze Tendenz des Werkes," wrote Ludwig Geiger, "ist eine Glorifizierung Frankreichs und eine Herabsetzung Deutschlands."⁴¹ One of the major aims of *Jean-Christophe* they saw as this desire to demonstrate the superiority of France over Germany in cultural and artistic spheres. Geiger was to revise his opinion of the novel upon publication of parts Two and Three of *Jean-Christophe* in 1917, when he concluded that the initial bias of the work was redeemed by a new sense of balance and moderation.⁴²

Neither Karl Toth nor Gerhard Heine were to share this new-found tolerance, however. Toth continued to argue in 1918 that *Jean-Christophe* was destined, from its very inception, to undermine Germany. The Germany of *Jean-Christophe*, he recognised, was never intended to relate in a direct manner to any social, historical or political reality of the nation as such, for it was built upon Rolland's own fanciful speculation: "er ruht auf einer windigen Phantasmagorie zu Schanden des deutschen Volkes."⁴³ It was unable to deal with Germany in a fair and just manner, in Toth's opinion, because the author had manipulated his material solely to accommodate his own literary and nationalistic ends.

Unlike Gallwitz, Karl Toth acknowledged the distinction which Rolland had drawn between the Germany of old and contemporary Germany. Germany was to be presented as a dichotomy as had been the case in the writings of numerous French commentators from Madame de Staël through to Ernest Renan and Hyppolyte Taine. Just as Renan before him, Rolland set the Germany of pre- and post-1870 in opposition. Toth objected strongly to this framework for it created, in his view, the erroneous image of an older, idealistic land, standing in stark contrast to a modern and ruthless state. The depiction of the triumph of materialism and militarism within the new nation was designed to alienate the hero of the novel, a representative of the spirit of idealistic Germany past. Driven from his homeland by the new corrupt leadership, Jean-Christophe could embody the concept of Germany, a nation betrayed. That, said Karl Toth, was the ideological message of *Jean-Christophe* and one surely not destined to find favour among German readers, in particular during wartime.

In support of his view, Toth used quotations not only from *La Révolte* but from later, purportedly more moderate and objective volumes of *Jean-Christophe*. It is proposed to reproduce some of these passages here, in order to remind ourselves of the tone employed on occasion in the novel, and thus better understand the case established by Toth and others. Rolland describes the sensations of oppression, physical and mental, engendered in Jean-Christophe by the triumph of militarism in Germany which Karl Toth condensed from *La Révolte* as follows:

Depuis les victoires allemandes, ces gens s'évertuaient à faire un compromis, un mic-mac écoeurant de la force nouvelle et des principes anciens... A l'exemple de Hegel, le Souabe, serein et double, qui avait attendu jusqu'après Leipzig et Waterloo pour assimiler la cause de sa philosophie avec l'Etat prussien, - l'intérêt ayant changé les principes avaient changé. Quand on était battu, on disait que l'Allemagne avait l'humanité pour idéal. Maintenant qu'on battait les autres, on disait que l'Allemagne était l'idéal de l'humanité... La force était devenue sainte, maintenant qu'on l'avait avec soi... Mais quelle amertume cachée dans cette confession du peuple de Herder et de Goethe! Et combien cette victoire allemande était une addication,

une dégradation de l'idéal allemand!... Christophe avait la haine du militarisme brutal, qu'il sentait peser sur lui, de ces sabres sonnant sur le pavé, de ces faisceaux d'armes et de ces canons postés devant les casernes, la gueule braquée contre la ville, prêts à tirer.⁴⁴

Here one has exactly the same image of the German citizen, oppressed by a brutal military elite, affirmed Toth, as that which appeared in Romain Rolland's letter to Gerhart Hauptmann.

Gallwitz had also taken up this point in 1914. He cited for particular attention the pitched battle which takes place in Volume IV between members of the German military and ordinary German country folk at a village dance. The hatred between military and civilian is depicted in this episode of *La Révolte* as attaining terrifyingly brutal heights, with, among other acts of horrifying cruelty, country girls tipping hot ashes into the eyes of soldiers. This depiction of German society torn apart by internal conflict, may have appeared harmless during peacetime, conceded Gallwitz, a burlesque, a gruesome fairy tale. However, a re-reading of these scenes in 1914 showed, in Gallwitz' view, how Rolland had insidiously sought to undermine Germany's image as a civilised nation and how he had been aided and abetted by German admirers:

Man vergegenwärtigte sich noch einmal, daß dies Stücke des Buches sind, von dem bei uns geredet wurde als von einer Sphäre der Gerechtigkeit, von einer Tat, die im jungen Frankreich ein wohlwollendes Verständnis für deutsche Art herbeigeführt haben sollte. Gott bewahre uns vor allen falschen Freunden!⁴⁵

One might argue that this denunciation of German militarism is defused by the fact that it takes place in *La Révolte*, a volume which Rolland had always intended as a polemical piece, as a highly subjective expression of Jean-Christophe's adolescent struggle with himself and his society. Toth maintained, however, that a very similar tone persists in the discussion of Germany's political role in Europe in later volumes. *Dans la Maison* was composed in 1908 during the Moroccan Crisis and there Rolland had written

the following denunciation of Germany's political role on the world stage, quoted by Toth as follows:

On reconnaissait là l'orgueilleuse démente de l'impérialisme allemand, soûl de ses victoires, et l'incapacité totale de ses hommes d'Etat à comprendre les autres races, en leur appliquant à toutes la même commune mesure qui fait loi pour eux: la force, raison suprême.⁴⁶

Toth underlined this authorial attribution of guilt by further quoting from volume X. Here the critic maintained, Rolland relinquished his mask of *Weltbürger*, to go over to an ever more open attack on Germany:

Au reste, il était vrai que l'Allemagne portait la plus lourde charge des péchés de l'Europe. Quand on a la victoire, on en est responsable, on contracte une dette envers ceux qu'on a vaincus; on prend l'engagement tacite de marcher devant eux, de leur montrer le chemin. Louis XIV vainqueur apportait à l'Europe la splendeur de la raison française. Quelle lumière l'Allemagne de Sedan a-t-elle apportée au monde? L'éclair des baïonnettes? Une pensée sans ailes, une action sans générosité, un réalisme brutal, qui n'a même pas l'excuse d'être celui d'hommes sains; la force et l'intérêt: Mars commis-voyageur.⁴⁷

The statement, said Toth, was a very clear one: Germany carried the major responsibility for the volatile atmosphere in Europe post-1870, by her ruthless pursuit of self-interest and by the constant exercise of the threat of brute force. It was the absence of any reference to these passages in pre-war German criticism which had so outraged Toth.

It is now in fact possible to trace, through a study of Rolland's contemporary correspondence, that the view expressed in *Jean-Christophe* with regard to Germany and the threat of war, was indeed also one which he held privately. By 1908 and the Second Moroccan Crisis, Rolland had come to believe that the German monarchy was simply waiting for the right moment to bring the colonial struggle back to a European stage. He wrote to a German friend, Elsa Wolff, in June 1908:

Savez-vous qu'à force de remuer cette feraille, on finira, je le crains, par avoir la guerre, tout de bon? Votre empereur m'a l'air, dès à présent, d'y être décidé et de n'attendre que le moment: et le plus grave, c'est qu'il m'y semble conduit par une croyance mystique en la guerre, comme le seul remède actuellement capable de retremper l'Allemagne décadente, de laver les âmes, de refaire dans l'Empire la santé et l'autorité.⁴⁸

This confirmation that Rolland harboured a deep distrust of Wilhelm II's Germany was not, of course, to hand for German wartime critics. The directly accusatory language of the novel was sufficient cause for outrage, however, and confirmed these commentators in their conviction that Rolland used the novel to express personal prejudice. *Jean-Christophe* was no conciliatory work, Karl Toth thundered, for under the guise of impartiality, Rolland had delivered a bitter and ignorant attack upon Germany. Pre-war German critics, as we remember, had proclaimed the novel to be a treatise, a programme for reconciliation between France and Germany.⁴⁹ Toth now provided the German reader with a diametrically opposed interpretation of the novel's underlying message: *Jean-Christophe* was food for the *revanchiste* cause in France. It was designed more to encourage war than to prevent it, for it provided French youth with a damning analysis of the state of Germany:

Das Werk, das bestimmt schien, dem heranbrandenden Unheil einen starken Damm entgegenzusetzen, muß gerade der Begehrlichkeit der Revancheschreier neue und entscheidende Nahrung gegeben haben.⁵⁰

Toth contended that the implicit message of *Jean-Christophe* could quite easily have been interpreted as a belligerent one: since Germany was ruled by a brutal military caste which had betrayed the people and prostituted their most dearly held ideals, it would be an act of mercy and justice to liberate the oppressed nation through war. "Das deutsche Volk," Toth wrote, "ist ihm, dem 'Kenner' deutschen Lebens, nur der Kot unter den Sohlen einer Schar von kleinen Tyrannen."⁵¹ With such a view Rolland was perceived to have laid the ideological groundwork for the concept of a just war against Germany. A mandate for war for some, a mandate for peace for others!

Romain Rolland's depiction of the Moroccan Crisis in *Jean-Christophe* was also the object of some disappointment for Gerhard Heine. Rolland, Heine said, had unconsciously invented a political scenario which was destined to increase, not diminish French chauvinism. In attempting to portray the new spirit of Europeanism in Olivier, Rolland had naively boosted the French national ego:

Wie weit - so ist mein Eindruck - ist dieses edle Europäertum noch von der reinen Verwirklichung entfernt, wenn es in der Absicht, sich selbst darzustellen, eine politische Szene erfindet, die den französischen Chauvinismus zu steigern geeignet ist! Diese Tatsache ist um so schwerer wiegend, je weniger der geistvolle Verfasser sich ihrer bewußt ist. Während er das Haupt in die Wolken einer freien Kultur erhebt, zahlt er naiv dem französischen Selbstbewußtsein seinen Tribut.⁵²

Although Toth's accusations in particular appear exaggerated, there is some evidence to suggest that the novel did indeed encourage young Frenchmen to go to war against Germany. On 7 September 1914, Rolland received a letter from the mother of a young man killed in battle in the first days of combat. She wrote on her son's behalf to thank the author for the courage and inspiration *Jean-Christophe* had given to him and his friends:

Votre oeuvre avait formé de véritables disciples soulevés au-dessus des simples réalités de la vie par votre souffle ardent, et vous avez puissamment contribué à leur donner cette ardeur joyeuse qui leur a permis de partir si courageusement sans s'attendrir à regarder ce qu'ils laissaient derrière eux.⁵³

The source of inspiration for French youth would appear to have been the mood of self-sacrifice inspired by the novel, rather than the image of Germany which emerged from its pages. The letter nonetheless deeply shocked and saddened Rolland. The realisation that the virtues instilled in the younger generation by himself and others like him had facilitated the carnage, tore him apart. He was forced to concede with hindsight that indecision and

ambiguity had indeed characterised the debate on war contained within *Jean-Christophe*:

Cette génération héroïque de 1914, c'étaient nos jeunes frères, nos disciples, nos enfants. Nous les avons formés. Mais nous n'avions pas eu le temps de leur apprendre le chemin. Et nous ne le pouvions pas. Car ce chemin, avouons-le! nous ne le connaissons pas. Nous étions restés indécis, jusqu'à la dernière heure, à la croisée des routes.⁵⁴

That hesitation had not been registered by pre-war German critics; their wartime colleagues meanwhile were more inclined to interpret it as bellicosity.

If Rolland's depiction of modern Germany was largely rejected as a perfidious insult, how would wartime German critics react to his portrayal of the Germany of old? After all, had it not been Rolland's intention, according to Toth, to contrast old and new Germany in order to elevate the former whilst denigrating the latter? Did Rolland succeed in establishing in *Jean-Christophe* a positive image of Germany to counterbalance the negative portrait of the modern German state? Toth disapproved, as we have seen, of what he regarded as the establishment of a false dichotomy between past and present, seeing it as an attempt to alienate contemporary Germany both from her past and her future. He was, of course, also acutely concerned that such a standpoint would serve to undermine Germany's great war effort. The potential propaganda value of this perspective was recognised and quickly and categorically refuted.

Rolland's wartime critics were nonetheless willing to acknowledge the attempt to create within the novel "ideal" German types. The characters consistently chosen for particular attention in this regard were Jean-Christophe's Uncle Gottfried and the professor of music, Peter Schulz. Opinion was divided, however, as to whether Rolland had succeeded in his enterprise. For Gallwitz, Gottfried and Schulz were the only convincing characters in the novel,⁵⁵ while to Toth even they represented little more than

caricatures.⁵⁶ They were merely cardboard cut-outs designed to serve an ideological purpose: Jean-Christophe's kind-hearted Uncle Gottfried stood in opposition to the greedy and ruthless Uncle Theodor, and the gentle and kind Professor Schulz was set in contrast to the cynical and celebrated composer, Haßler.

The ambiguity of Romain Rolland's treatment of Peter Schulz meanwhile formed the core of Gerhard Heine's analysis. Heine acknowledged that Rolland presents in Schulz a moving portrait of German Idealism. That portrait, he contended, however, was by no means an entirely positive one, for although Schulz was gentle, affectionate, kind and loyal he was also pusillanimous. The Idealism embodied by Schulz was, in the final analysis, a denial of life and truth, an optimistic lie, shielding the frail individual from reality. It was essentially an inferior philosophy of life:

Wohl könnte jener alte Universitätsmusikdirektor als ein ergreifendes Bild deutschen Idealismus gelten; aber man wird seiner Wertung nicht recht froh, wenn es heißt: "Da sah er (Christof) die Größe des deutschen Idealismus, den er so oft gehaßt hatte, weil er den minderwertigen Seelen eine Quelle von Heuchelei und Albernheit wird. Er sah die Schönheit dieses Glaubens, der sich eine Welt inmitten der Welt und verschieden von ihr schafft, wie eine Insel im Ozean. - In sich selbst aber konnte er diesen Glauben nicht ertragen; ihm widerstrebte, auf diese Toteninsel zu flüchten. Leben! Wahrheit! Er wollte kein Held der Lüge sein."⁵⁷

Surely, Heine said, Germany had enough great Idealists to counter this charge of weakness: "Ich zweifle, daß Goethes Ehrfurcht, Schillers Tapferkeit und Fichtes Kraft, drei Typen des Idealismus, sich mit dieser Theorie der Schwäche vertragen."⁵⁸ Heine, again quoting from *Jean-Christophe*, showed however that Rolland was not willing to leave Goethe's image intact; even he was afflicted with the "hereditary German disease of indecision."⁵⁹ Rolland was thus seen by Gerhard Heine to undermine the concept of German Idealism as such in *Jean-Christophe*. The expressions of admiration appeared to him to be made from a standpoint of cultural and

philosophical superiority. Rolland's treatment not only of modern Germany but of the Germany of old was hence called into question.

Gerhard Heine was more generous in his treatment of Romain Rolland, however, than either Gallwitz, Geiger or Toth. He certainly acknowledged that Rolland also had some very complimentary things to say about Germany and her people. Yet, he said, the French author wavered and faltered in his judgements and eventually espoused a form of Eighteenth Century rationalism which denied him access to the deeper recesses of the German soul: "So wird nun auch verständlich, daß Rolland, wo er die Kräfte unter der Oberflächliche nicht sieht, einige oberflächliche Erscheinungen herausgreift und mit fixem Pinsel und grellen Farben ein Bild von deutscher Art malt."⁶⁰ Rolland's picture of Germany was correspondingly unsatisfactory, the line too rigid, the colours too shrill. Rolland was felt to have come very close to the style of *Simplizissimus*, the satirical journal, in many descriptive passages of German life. Thus, wrote Gerhard Heine, Rolland made the most respected scholar in Jean-Christophe's home town eagerly step down into the gutter to allow a Lieutenant to pass by.⁶¹ Subservience may indeed be a German trait, Heine conceded, but the fact that Rolland wished to attribute this characteristic universally, to include even the nation's greatest representatives, ultimately discredited the French author's judgement, he believed:

Mag Rolland von der beklagenswerten Neigung der Deutschen sprechen, sich unterzuordnen - es ist wohl etwas Richtiges daran -; aber daß er diese beklagenswerte Neigung "allen besten Deutschen" zuspricht, nimmt seinem Urteil Wert und Wahrheit.⁶²

Gallwitz was less tolerant of Rolland's "*Simplizissimus* style". The depiction of the German people in *La Révolte*, he said, as subservient, weak, sentimental, and indecisive was nothing short of grotesque. For satire to be effective, Gallwitz contested, it had essentially to be a reflection of reality. That is was not: "Niemals wohl ist eine oberflächliche und unwahre Charakterisierung furchtbarer Lügen gestraft worden, als es Rollands Beurteilung Deutschlands in diesen Monaten geschah!"⁶³ Many German

commentators agreed with this assertion that the Great War would prove how wrong Rolland had been in his judgements. War would provide evidence to the doubters of the true strength and stamina of the German race.

If one turns to the character of Jean-Christophe it is possible to find some approval of Rolland's portrait of musical genius. Indeed, Gallwitz limited his literary sympathy to this aspect of the novel.⁶⁴ The reception of the hero was generally, however, far less enthusiastic than in the days before August 1914. As we recall, critics such as Otto Grautoff had greeted Jean-Christophe as a truly German manifestation, writing in August 1913: "In Romain Rollands großem Werk aber finden wir *den* Deutschen, wie wir ihn selbst nicht größer, reiner träumen können [...]." ⁶⁵ Our wartime critics denied, however, that Jean-Christophe could in any way be accepted as representative of Germany. Karl Toth and Gallwitz were outraged, Gerhard Heine disappointed, that Rolland refused to recognise in the genius a crystallization of the qualities and talents of the German people. "Aus kleinlich nationalen Feindseligkeiten heraus," wrote Gallwitz "verkennt Rolland die Urwahrheit, daß das Genie in seiner Wesensart doch immer nur die stärkste Kristallisierung des Volkes sein kann, aus welchem es hervorwuchs." ⁶⁶ Rolland was seen by Gerhard Heine to judge the German people from the point of view of aristocratic pessimism, with no recognition or regard for the qualities of the broad masses: "das schmerzliche Gefühl bleibt, daß ein großer und reicher Geist das Gesamtbild verzeichnet, weil ihm das tiefere Verständnis für die Volksseele fehlt." ⁶⁷ Proof of this was also to be found in the limitations imposed by the author upon Jean-Christophe's relationship with his homeland, as ignorant of the aspirations of the infant nation, Christophe turns his back on Germany. Rolland, Toth believed, had indeed created a hero in the vein of Mme de Staël. In so doing, however, he merely perpetuated the illusions of previous so-called *Deutschenkenner*:

So bestätigt jeder Einzelzug dieses schwer verschrobenen Sittengemäldes jene Behauptung, daß Romain Rolland mit der gleichen selbstherrlichen Illusion des Romanen wie seine Vorgänger an das Deutschtum herangetreten ist.⁶⁸

If the character of Jean-Christophe could not redeem the novel in the eye of those critics in search of positive projections of Germany, it was conceivable that even the most diffident German critic might still be won over by the debate on German music which takes place within the work. "Vornehmlich aber ist alles", Gallwitz had written, "was über Musik in den zehn Büchern enthalten ist, in hohem Grade wert gelesen und wieder gelesen zu werden."⁶⁹ Yet, even this was rejected by the Viennese Professor Heinrich who prepared a series of articles which investigated the musical aspect of *Jean-Christophe* for the Berlin weekly journal *Signale für die musikalische Welt*. "Der deutsche Tonkünstler des 20. Jahrhunderts nach Romain Rollands *Jean-Christophe*" was to be the title of this critique published in May 1916. In this long and very detailed study, Heinrich attempted to isolate and analyse those elements of the novel which deal directly or indirectly with music. His aim was to trace the development of the musical genius, Jean-Christophe, and to establish a coherent picture of the attitudes to German music in the novel. Heinrich was in fact unwilling to draw any distinction between Rolland and his fictional creation in this regard, referring to author and protagonist in one phrase: "Rolland-Christophe."⁷⁰

Heinrich was not alone in believing that the Frenchman's fictional and non-fictional writing contained very similar attitudes to German music. Alexander Berrische, in an aggressive article published in the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* in 1915, insisted that Rolland's attacks on Germany had not started with his letter to Gerhart Hauptmann, nor were they limited, he said, to passages of *Jean-Christophe*. In evidence, Berrische pointed to Romain Rolland's report of the music festival of 1905 held in Strasbourg. In that and countless other essays, he averred, Rolland had associated Germany with brutality and megalomania long before the outbreak of war: "Deutschlands Herrschsucht, Deutschlands Brutalität, kurz sämtliche Leitartikelüberschriften der Dreiverbandspresse gehören schon seit Jahren zu Rollands musikalischer Terminologie."⁷¹ With this knowledge, contended Berrische, no German could stand in defence of Rolland. "Der Krieg," he wrote "hat das Schauspiel unmöglich gemacht, auch in dieser Frage Deutsche auf der Seite Rollands zu sehen."⁷² Professor Heinrich adopted a less polemical stance

than Berrische, although he did concur in the belief that Jean-Christophe's attitude to German music was also unmistakably that of his creator.

Heinrich found Jean-Christophe a rather curious phenomenon. Even as a child, Christophe did not react to the beauty of the melodies of a musical piece, but rather the music awakened within him feelings and emotions which did not directly pertain to the composition. Heinrich illustrated his point with reference to Jean-Christophe's first encounter with a major orchestral work, Beethoven's *Coriolanus-Overture*. The child's reactions, he contended, were unconvincing. For instead of appreciating the beauty and nobility of the music, Jean-Christophe heard only the emotions of anger and pain and the joyful acceptance of suffering that these notes provoked within his breast. Jean-Christophe appeared to Heinrich to combine an improbable emotional maturity in one so young with a curious insensitivity to the aesthetic experience of musical beauty. Jean-Christophe's relationship with music did not have its roots in an appreciation of music as such, but in music solely as a means of experiencing and expressing emotion: "Jean-Christophe scheint keine musikalische Anlage, die ihre Befriedigung zuerst immer in der Form sucht, sondern nur ein eigentümliches Bedürfnis zu haben, mit Tönen Gefühle zu verbinden."⁷³ This rejection of the primacy of music as an aesthetic experience was, in Professor Heinrich's view, a rejection of the very core of the art form. There are parallels to be drawn here with Rolland's rejection of aestheticism in literature.

Heinrich pointed to the influence of Beethoven on the creation of Jean-Christophe's character. The historical and the fictional figures were both born close to the Rhine, displayed musical genius from the earliest childhood days, and were passionate, strong, often fiercely independent individuals. However, there were three qualities which were decidedly lacking in Rolland's creation: purity, a profound respect for musical tradition and an obsessive diligence. Their absence was, ultimately, to debar Jean-Christophe from the German musical fraternity. Beethoven, wrote Heinrich, had espoused the maxim "Genie ist Fleiß" and had always recognised the need for painstaking, incessant labour. Roman Rolland's hero categorically rejected

this, however, believing that the working and re-working of a musical composition corrupted and debased its intrinsic beauty. "Armer Beethoven", commented Heinrich acerbically, - " -so möchten wir, dies lesend, sagen - wie warst du zu beklagen, daß du deine Musik komponieren mußtest!"⁷⁴ In reality, it was Christophe who distorted and corrupted music with his constant attempts to establish a rigid link between music and the real world and with his desire to give emotional content to musical abstraction:

Daher kommt es dann auch - eine weitere verhängnisvolle Folge seiner jugendlichen Krisis - daß Christophe das Verständnis und den Respekt vor seinen großen deutschen Meistern verliert. Seine falsche Auffassung der musikalischen Form verleitet ihn dazu, wie in seinen eignen Kompositionen, so auch in denen Beethovens, Mendelssohns, Schumanns, Wagners lauter Leere und Lüge zu erblicken.⁷⁵

Jean-Christophe's bitter criticisms in *La Révolte* attacked the false emotions and formalism of the great German composers. Richard Wagner was a prime target for Christophe's displeasure; he found *Lohengrin* hypocritical, vain, bordering on the ridiculous; Mendelssohn melancholy and empty; Weber pompous and dry; Schubert filled with insipid sentimentality. Not even Beethoven escaped his fictional soul mate's uncompromising censure. Sentimentality, that was the disease which afflicted not only German art, it gnawed at the German soul itself. This was how Professor Heinrich, much like Gerhart Heine earlier, saw "Rolland-Christophe's" portrayal of the German condition.

[...] denn der Grund der deutschen Seele ist Unsicherheit, schwankend weiche Empfindsamkeit, Mangel an Aufrichtigkeit, im ganzen eine moralische Schwäche, die den Deutschen hindert, sich selbst so zu sehen, wie er ist, sich seine eignen Gefühle einzugestehen und sie auszusprechen.⁷⁶

True, Professor Heinrich conceded, "Rolland-Christophe's" viewpoint changed over the course of the novel. As Jean-Christophe matured he gradually came to admire his German predecessors. That admiration however, was not based upon a reverence for their musical talents, wrote

Heinrich, but rather on an appreciation of their personal qualities: "Nicht sowohl die Musik Schuberts bewundert er, als vielmehr seine Güte, in Haydn die Unschuld, in Mozart die Zärtlichkeit, in Beethoven den Heroismus."⁷⁷

Heinrich commented wryly: "Diese Männer, gesteht er sich, sind groß gewesen durch sich selbst, klein und heuchlerisch freilich, insoweit sie Deutsche waren."⁷⁸

Jean-Christophe was compelled by Professor Heinrich to relinquish his claim to German lineage. Christophe's refusal to acknowledge the primacy of beauty in musical composition, his gross misunderstanding of and arrogance towards great German music of the past made him a most unlikely portrait of a contemporary German composer:

Wir freuen uns, daß Christoph so nachsichtig geworden ist, müssen aber doch Protest einlegen dagegen, daß ein Mann, der der großen deutschen Musik gegenüber auf dem Standpunkt solcher verständnislosen und leichtfertigen Überhebung steht, der Typus eines ernsten deutschen Komponisten unsrer Tage sein soll.⁷⁹

Brahms, the object of "Rolland-Christophe's" greatest displeasure, was far more representative of the German composer than Rolland's creation.

Jean-Christophe, noted Heinrich, was convinced of his own moral superiority over the great German masters of the past because of his uncompromising search for truth in life as well as in music. "Rolland-Christophe" found the antithesis of this quest for truth in the German *Lied* which was described as sentimental, empty and false. Heinrich found it extraordinary that in this context only the *Volkslied* was considered and the songs of Schubert, Schumann and Brahms excluded. For in the songs of the great composers, he believed, Jean-Christophe might have discovered the power and courage for which he was searching: "Allein zu solcher Würdigung bringt er es nicht; wir wissen nicht recht, warum."⁸⁰ The charge of either ignorance or prejudice is clear.

The suggestion of prejudice was reinforced in the examination of Jean-Christophe's relationship to French music. Christophe was driven out of Germany by the ignorance, arrogance and subservience of society there. That much Heinrich was willing to allow to pass and he was undoubtedly more generous here than some of the other critics we have looked at in this chapter. He objected strongly, however, to the suggestion that Jean-Christophe had to journey to Paris in order to learn about the importance of clarity and beauty to the art of musical composition. Those were qualities which German music had epitomised:

Daß die fein abwägende französische Musikweise die Kunst des jungen Deutschen wohltätig beeinflußt, ist begreiflich, daß er aber erst in Paris Klarheit und Plastik lernt, seine Schuld, denn deren Urbilder und Vorbilder besitzt Deutschland.⁸¹

It seemed to this Viennese professor of music that one of Rolland's major concerns was in reality to prove the ascendancy of French over German music. This he read in the insistence that France had toppled Germany from her musical throne in 1870. Affirmation of this point was one of Rolland's chief ideological goals in *Jean-Christophe*, contended Heinrich. Yet, both Wagner and Brahms still had their best to give after 1870. Who, he asked, could Rolland put forward to rival either of these German masters? The only name he had found in *Jean-Christophe* to answer this enquiry was that of the relatively minor César Franck. The tendency to compare the incomparable was, said Heinrich, characteristic of the highly subjective standpoint of the novel:

Es ist natürlich jedermann gestattet, Franck oder sonst jemand auf eine Linie mit Brahms oder Wagner zu stellen, wer es aber tut, verzichtet doch wohl auf vergleichende Werturteile. Dieser Verzicht ist für den Autor von *Jean-Christophe* charakteristisch.⁸²

Indeed, Rolland's greatest failing in *Jean-Christophe* was seen in his unwillingness to acknowledge the importance of the German contribution to

world music. That was an extraordinary omission for a writer such as Rolland with his background in musical history:

Nirgends finden wir in den 10 Bänden des Romans, obgleich sein Held doch ein Deutscher ist und es auch an philosophierenden Exkursen über seine Kunst nicht fehlen läßt, die musikhistorische Bedeutung der deutschen Tonkunst oder eines einzelnen ihrer Meister anerkannt.⁸³

As a consequence, Rolland had failed to foster a greater understanding between the musical traditions of the two countries. His analysis was too subjective:

Trotz vieler richtig und fein beobachteter Züge ist Rollands Bild von deutscher Musik und vom deutschen Musiker kein zutreffendes und wenig geeignet, Deutsche und Franzosen auf musikalischem Gebiet einander näher zu bringen.⁸⁴

Divisive, said Heinrich, not conciliatory. *Jean-Christophe*, which had once seemed to represent a greater act of diplomacy than all official attempts at *rapprochement*,⁸⁵ now saw itself demoted to an interesting yet highly tendentious and ultimately divisive statement on Franco-German cultural relations.

The early wartime critics thus came to very different conclusions with regard to *Jean-Christophe* than their pre-war colleagues: divisive, profoundly anti-German, fodder for the *revanchiste* cause in France. This was the dominant vocabulary which would surely have made interesting reading for those French critics who were busily engaged in the destruction of Rolland's reputation at home. Yet, if they were united in condemning the ideological content of the novel, these German critics were also curiously at one in praising its literary worth. Gerhard Heine, as we have seen, described *Jean-Christophe* as one of the greatest contributions to the genre of the *Erziehungsroman* in modern world literature.⁸⁶ Even Gallwitz was forced to admit that the novel possessed many attractive qualities:

Es ist gar keine Frage, daß der Rollandsche Roman in allen seinen Teilen, vornehmlich in dem in Frankreich spielenden, eine Fülle von geistigen und künstlerischen Bereicherungen zu bieten vermag.⁸⁷

Karl Toth was a notable exception in not approving of *Jean-Christophe* as a work of literature, finding the novel overly long and pedantic. Yet even Toth felt he had to support the stated aims of both the hero and his creator to establish an art form which fed not upon beauty and luxury, but which represented "le fruit sacré de la peine humaine".⁸⁸ "Und hier", wrote Toth, "ist dem Franzosen Rolland ernsthaftes deutsches Wesen freilich tiefer eingegangen, als er selber ahnt."⁸⁹

The inadequacy of *Jean-Christophe* was thus identified very largely in Rolland's inability to project a just and objective picture of Germany. Yet justice and objectivity in the depiction of Germany had been, to pre-war German critics, the very object of their pleasure and praise. The critical perspective on *Jean-Christophe* had undergone a radical transformation in August 1914 as the ideological content of the novel was weighed with an eye to Germany's war effort. An acute sensitivity to opinion on Germany was prevalent. Whilst Rolland's picture of Germany is undoubtedly ambiguous, the main bone of critical contention lay not in *Jean-Christophe* but in the definition of what constituted Germany and German culture. Critics only became clear on this point later, as the emotional turmoil awakened by the Great War subsided.

It could not be the task of a Frenchman to define German life and letters, these wartime commentators concluded. To emphasise this very point, Gerhard Heine, and later Karl Toth, turned an authorial comment from *Jean-Christophe* on its head, asking:

Ist man nicht versucht, bei diesem Mangel in der Auffassung Rollands seine Worte: "Als ob es Sache eines Deutschen wäre, zu entscheiden, was französisch ist und was nicht," mit der nötigen Änderung auf ihn anzuwenden?⁹⁰

Notes

- 1 Toth, Karl: "*Jean-Christophe* und die deutsche Kultur" (hereafter cited as Toth). In: *Deutsche Rundschau*, vol XLIV, January 1918, p 57. Toth reversed the following quotation from *Jean-Christophe*, Vol I, p 451: "Comme s'il appartenait à un Allemand de dire ce qui est Français et ce qui ne l'est point."
- 2 Pr. [Prillip], B. [Beda]: "Romain Rolland über Krieg und Vaterland." In: *Hochland*, vol XII, no 4, January 1915, p 482.
- 3 Grautoff, Erna: Unpublished letter dated 30 December 1915. FRR. Bibliothèque Nationale.
- 4 See note 114, Chapter II.
- 5 See note 1 above.
- 6 Gallwitz, S D: "Romain Rolland und der deutsche Geist" (hereafter cited as Gallwitz). In: *Die Hilfe*, Vol XX, no 50, 10 December 1914, p 818.
- 7 As discussed in Chapter III above.
- 8 Gallwitz, p 818.
- 9 Ibid, p 819.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Gallwitz wrote: "Eine starke, harmonische Durchbildung, Kultur im wahren Sinne, spricht aus dem Verfasser. Seiner Art zu sehen ist ein gutes Stück von jenem durch Witz gemilderten Skeptizismus eigen, der in der Behandlung und Bewertung der Dinge niemals lehrhaft oder trocken wird." (Ibid).
- 12 See note 85, Chapter I.
- 13 Ibid.

- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Gallwitz, p 819.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 See: Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, pp 157 - 158. The injurious Russian article stated, among other things, that Schnitzler believed Gerhart Hauptmann to be a greater poet than Shakespeare, and that the Austrian author considered Tolstoy to be a drivelling old fool.
- 19 Anon: "Feuilleton." In: *Deutsche Tageszeitung*, 19 January 1915.
After: Block, Paul: "Kultur - ?". In: *Berliner Tageblatt*, 21 January 1915.
- 20 See Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, pp 246 - 247.
- 21 Heine, Gerhard: "*Johann Christof*. Von Romain Rolland" (hereafter cited as Heine (1915)). In: *Die Christliche Welt*, vol XXIX, no 6, 11 February 1915, cols 114 - 119.
- 22 Ibid, col 114.
- 23 Bonsels, Waldemar: *Das junge Deutschland und der große Krieg* (hereafter referred to as Bonsels). Munich and Vienna 1914, p 16.
- 24 Heine (1915), col 118.
- 25 Bonsels, p 17.
- 26 Ibid, p 5.
- 27 See: Großhans, Karl: *Romain Rolland und der germanische Geist*. Konrad Trilitsch, Würzburg 1937. This work is discussed in Chapter VII of the present study.
- 28 Geiger, Ludwig: "Romain Rolland" (hereafter referred to as Geiger (1915)). In: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, vol LXXIX, no 18, 30

April 1915, p 213. The journal was edited by Professor Dr Geiger who also occupied the position of "Geheimer Regierungsrat."

29 Toth, p 58.

30 Toth wrote: "Das philisterhaft beschränkte Geschehen um einen kleinen Fürstenhof am Rhein, das etwa zu Beginn des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts den Schwung der Begabungen gehemmt haben mag, wird sorglos in eine Zeit übertragen, wo Jean-Christophe gegen alle die angeblichen Ungeheuerlichkeiten des Molochs Deutsches Reich zufelde liegt. So geht die Enge der altdeutschen Kleinstaaterei mit dem heftig ins Weite drängenden modernen Leben eine unnatürliche Paarung ein." Ibid, p 61.

31 Gallwitz, p 819.

32 Ibid.

33 Toth, p 59.

34 Ibid.

35 Heine (1915), col 118.

36 Toth, p 60.

37 Gallwitz, p 819.

38 See note 7, Chapter I.

39 See: Cheval, René: *Romain Rolland*, pp 96 - 117.

40 See note 39, Chapter I.

41 Geiger (1915), p 213.

42 Geiger, Ludwig: "Romain Rolland." In: *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums*, vol LXXXI, no 33, 17 August 1917, pp 389 - 391. Geiger considered Part Two of *Jean-Christophe* to be of greater literary value than Part One and much more acceptable to a German-speaking audience ("für uns Deutsche weit wohltuender," *ibid*, p 389).

- 43 Toth, p 61.
- 44 Ibid, p 63. Taken from *Jean-Christophe*, vol II, pp 58 - 60.
- 45 Gallwitz, p 820. Gallwitz was referring to *Jean-Christophe*, vol II, pp 73 - 80.
- 46 *Jean-Christophe*, vol II, pp 476 - 477. Toth commented: "Da sich in den Wochen der Marokkokrise die Hetzmeute der ganzen Welt mit wüstem Geheul gegen Deutschland erhob, hat Romain Rolland durchaus nicht zaghaft in dieses geifernde Kläffen mit eingestimmt." Toth, p 75.
- 47 *Jean-Christophe*, vol III, p 334. Quoted by Toth, p 76.
- 48 Rolland, Romain: *CRR XIV*, p 173.
- 49 See note 69, Chapter I.
- 50 Toth, p 75.
- 51 Ibid, p 76.
- 52 Heine, Gerhard: "Johann Christof in Paris"; hereafter referred to as Heine (1917). In: *Die Christliche Welt*, vol XXI, no 49, 6 December 1917, col 847.
- 53 See: Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 48.
- 54 Rolland, Romain: *Quinze ans de combat*, p 149.
- 55 Gallwitz, p 819. Gallwitz concluded: "Im übrigen sind in der Fülle der episodischen und skizzenhaft behandelten Figuren nur zwei, die als Typen ernst genommen werden können." Ibid.
- 56 Toth, p 63.
- 57 Heine (1915), col 117. The quotation is taken from *Jean-Christophe*, vol II, p 56.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid, col 118. Heine asked: "Ist die Willenlosigkeit wirklich 'die Erbkrankheit in Deutschland'? 'Die Größten waren ihr nicht entronnen' - waren Luther, Schiller, Hebbel, Stein etwa Franzosen? Rolland überhört den Einwand und fährt fort: '- selbst der Größte von allen, der göttliche Goethe nicht, des verschwommenen Lichtes Genie, der seine allumfassende Unschlüssigkeit ins Wundervolle umgestaltete: der majestätische Strom, der alle Wasser der Erde wälzte, in dem die ganze Welt sich spiegelte, - auch er war schließlich im Sande verlaufen, - wie der Rhein.'"

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 Gallwitz, p 820.

64 Ibid, p 819.

65 See note 80, Chapter I.

66 Gallwitz, p 820.

67 Heine (1915), col 118.

68 Toth, p 72.

69 Gallwitz, p 819.

70 Heinrich, F: "der deutsche Tonkünstler des 20. Jahrhunderts, nach Romain Rollands *Jean-Christophe*" (hereafter referred to as Heinrich). In: *Signale für die musikalische Welt*, no 20, 17 May 1916, p 364ff.

71 Berrische, Alexander: "Französische Musiker" (hereafter referred to as Berrische). In: *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, March 1915, p 782. Romain Rolland had his defenders in the German press. Wilhelm Herzog, editor of *Das Forum*, immediately announced that Berrische, who had on occasion written musical critiques for the journal, had now effectively made himself

persona non grata. Herzog wrote: "Ich teile meinen Lesern mit, daß von diesem Herrn nie wieder eine Zeile im *Forum* zu finden sein wird." Herzog, Wilhelm: "Notizen." In: *Das Forum*, vol I, no 12, March 1915, p 662.

72 Berrische, p 783.

73 Heinrich, no 20, 17 May 1916, p 362.

74 Ibid, no 22, 31 May 1916, p 395.

75 Ibid, no 20, 17 May 1916, p 363.

76 Ibid, p 364.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid, no 22, 31 May 1916, p 395.

80 Ibid, no 20, 17 May 1916, p 365.

81 Ibid, no 21, 24 May 1916, p 382.

82 Ibid, p 381.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid, no 22, 31 May 1916, p 399.

85 See note 69, Chapter I.

86 See note 22 above.

87 Gallwitz, p 819.

88 *Jean-Christophe*, vol III, p 119. Toth commented: "Diese erstaunlich deutsche Überlegung reißt die gesamte französische Kunst frevelhaft aus ihrem üppigsten Nährboden: dem Luxus und Überfluß." Toth, p 68.

89 Toth, p 68.

90 Heine (1915), col 119.

Chapter IV

THE REHABILITATION OF *JEAN-CHRISTOPHE*

Wenn irgendeiner unter den
lebenden französischen Dichtern,
so hat Romain Rolland das heilige
Recht, auch heute von uns gehört
zu werden.¹

The attempts by German literary commentators to re-read *Jean-Christophe* with a view to exposing Romain Rolland as at best an unsatisfactory, at worst a scandalous interpreter of German life and letters became rarer as the War progressed. Rolland was gradually able to rally considerable amounts of support in the German-speaking world for both his political struggle and for *Jean-Christophe*. Frayed German nerves after the publication of the exchange with Gerhart Hauptmann were soothed by the more conciliatory tones of "Au-dessus de la Mêlée." Meanwhile the publication of the Second and Third parts of the German translation of *Jean-Christophe* took place in 1917 and 1918, and with these volumes came a new wave of reviews and commentaries. Let us first turn our attention, however, to Rolland's political impact on the German scene after the initial outcry had died down.

Rolland's political essays of 1914/1915 were not readily available to a German-speaking readership. Indeed, French Government censorship for a time ensured that these texts were not readily accessible in France. Most were published in Swiss journals and newspapers, notably the *Journal de Genève* during the early war period and later in the *Revue mensuelle*, *Les Tablettes*, the *Revue Carmel* and Henri Guilbeaux' *Demain*. When the collection of sixteen letters and articles was eventually published under the

title of the famous essay of the same name, *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* in Paris in November 1915, no German translation appeared. However, a limited number of these essays were reproduced, often in abridged form, in German journals. There are some notable examples to be found among the German left-wing press. In December 1914, Wilhelm Herzog became one of the first German commentators to publicly reassess his position with regard to Rolland. Before himself being silenced by the German censor in 1915, Herzog published extracts from "Au-dessus de la Mêlée", "Notre prochain, l'ennemi" and "Pour l'Europe" in *Das Forum*.² He reproduced these articles in a section headed "Dokumente der Liebe" and he informed his readership that he considered them to be among the most important writings of the War. *Die weißen Blätter* also re-printed passages of Rolland's appeal to women in "A l'Antigone éternelle."³ and Gustav Landauer translated "Appel à la jeunesse héroïque d'Europe" in the summer of 1915 for the journal *Der Sozialist*, provoking an enthusiastic reception among German youth.⁴

It would seem, however, that the critical reception of the work was carried out for the most part by those German-speakers capable of reading the text in the original. Difficulty of access in no way inhibited a substantial critical discourse about Rolland's ideas and intentions as voiced in *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*. There was a tremendous eagerness among the German intelligentsia to become acquainted with the war-time thinking of Rolland. Otto Grautoff wrote in January 1917 that the thin volume of *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* had become the trusted companion of many a German soldier in the trenches.⁵

In December 1914, Wilhelm Herzog made representations to the readership of *Das Forum* on behalf of Romain Rolland because he said that he now recognised in the Frenchman an unerring commitment to humanity. He regretted the vehemence of his initial reaction to the open letter to Gerhart Hauptmann, in which he had called into question Rolland's integrity as a writer and a man. Herzog came to believe that Rolland, more than any other member of the French intelligentsia, had remained unsullied by the two greatest threats to humanity: hatred and anger. Nowhere, Herzog now

declared, had Rolland expressed these demeaning emotions in either fictional or non-fictional writing:

Man kann die Dinge anders sehen als Rolland, ja, man kann einzelne seiner Gedanken für bekämpfenswert halten, das Grundgefühl jedoch, aus dem heraus dieser Dichter spricht, ist liebenswerteste Menschlichkeit.⁶

He saw in Rolland a writer who had consciously cast aside the mantle of artist, in order to remain loyal to a sense of common humanity. Rolland was seen to stand in opposition to other French writers, notably Emile Verhaeren, who had been more than prepared to sacrifice their own humanity in order to augment the propaganda value of their work. In refusing to prostitute his artistic talents in the service of war, Herzog declared, Rolland had performed a greater deed by far than Verhaeren with his poems of hatred: "Er verbietet sich im Gegensatz etwa zu Verhaeren jede poetische Exaltation, er negiert den Dichter in sich, um ganz Mensch sein zu dürfen."⁷

This great interest in Rolland's *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* did not, however, mean uncritical approbation in the German camp for his views. Many German commentators, including Wilhelm Herzog, did not approve of Romain Rolland's interpretation or characterisation of the War as such. Rolland's subconscious patriotism, his clear partisanship to the French cause, were felt to mar any claim that he made to stand above the *mêlée*. Most German-speaking critics did highlight the unconscious subjectivity of *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, apportioning varying degrees of blame to its author for this weakness.

Thomas Mann was one of the least forgiving of the German commentators. In *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, published in 1918, Mann referred to *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* with irony as Rolland's "unendlich wohlmeinendes Kriegsbüchlein."⁸ The vehemence of his attack upon what he perceived to be Rolland's hypocrisy is exceptional, however, rather than representative. He did not hesitate to denounce Rolland's claim to neutrality and objectivity as an "ausgemachte Selbsttäuschung."⁹ Mann focused upon the French author's blindness to the chauvinism and irrational barbarism of the French intellectual

elite. Effectively, he declared, Rolland had only ever attacked expressions of hatred within the enemy camp, turning a blind eye to the grotesque excesses of the French.

Thomas Mann's attack on Rolland in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* was to assume a very personal character. Mann was doubtless deeply wounded by Rolland's reading of "Gedanken im Kriege", which the Frenchman had branded an "accès de délire d'orgueil et de fanatisme irrité."¹⁰ Rolland had publicly accused him in *Les Idoles*, as we remember, of being one of the most sinister enemies of German culture and the German people. Mann did not relish the title and described Rolland's own reading of the essay as that of an intellectual degenerate or philistine:

Sie sind Schriftsteller, Romain Rolland, und Sie haben meinen Artikel gelesen und interpretiert, wie ein begriffsstutziger, im Geistigen unbewandter Spießer ihn gelesen und interpretiert haben würde.¹¹

The sense of anger in these words is conveyed very clearly. Indeed, such was the depth of bitterness felt by Thomas Mann that it led him to make a dishonest attack upon the French writer in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. He accused Rolland of approving the re-introduction of the three year conscription period to the French army, a measure considered by Germany in 1913 to represent a considerable escalation of the threat of war:

Ja, Ihnen, Rolland, dem Philanthropen und Pazifisten, könnte ich nachweisen, daß sie die Wiedereinführung der dreijährigen Dienstzeit, die nach Einsicht Einsichtiger den Krieg und nichts anderes bedeutete, privatim verteidigt und gebilligt haben [...]. Genug! Genug!¹²

"Privatim" was a reference to a letter dated 3 July 1913 by Romain Rolland which had come into Mann's possession and was addressed to the Austrian critic Paul Amann.¹³ The degree of intellectual dishonesty employed by Thomas Mann in the use of this reference was later uncovered by Amann in the *Münchener Blätter für Dichtung und Graphik*. In an article entitled "Politik und Moral in Thomas Manns *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*" of

1919, Amann revealed that the letter to which Mann referred did not express approval for the re-introduction of three year conscription period at all. It merely noted the dominant mood of approbation towards the measure in France and expressly excluded any attribution of personal approval. Amann quoted from a translation of Rolland's letter as follows:

Das sind nicht die persönlichen Ansichten Romain Rollands, die ich Ihnen da mitteile, es ist die innerste Stimme meines Volkes, die ich hier verdolmetsche; bin ich doch seit langen Jahren gewohnt, ihr leisestes Flüstern zu belauschen. Ich fälle kein Urteil darüber: Die Wesen sind was sie sind.¹⁴

The reference, Amann concluded, had been consciously misused: "Thomas Mann hat die ganze Stelle gekannt, hat sie also bewußt entstellt."¹⁵ He was appalled by Mann's dishonesty. "Ja warum hielt er," Amann asked, "diese angesäuerten, halbgegohten, ätzend schädlichen Weisheitssätze nicht zurück?"¹⁶

Thomas Mann's clumsy endeavour to brand Rolland a hypocrite seemed to bear the mark of a personal grudge. Romain Rolland, he said, had been savagely attacked in France for what amounted to the expression of a very modest demand for individual freedom of conscience in *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*. This merely illustrated, in Mann's opinion, the irrational and barbaric mood of France at war, not the moral stature of Rolland himself. Rolland's title of "germanophile" was wholly undeserved: "Ach, wie wenig verdienen Sie das Brandmal des enboché, wie wenig das Exil!"¹⁷

Although this commentary on the French author in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* may have been personally motivated, Thomas Mann was not entirely alone in questioning the intellectual honesty of Rolland's claim to neutrality. Karl Eugen Schmidt in his review of *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* for the *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten* in March 1916 was singularly unimpressed by the stance Rolland adopted in these texts. Rolland, Schmidt maintained, had essentially demonstrated no greater objectivity than that of the vast majority of the German population. For the message of the work was no

more controversial than the commonplace notion that there are good and bad, honest and dishonest, intelligent and stupid people in every nation:

In Wirklichkeit ist Rolland nicht neutraler als die ungeheure Mehrheit des deutschen Volkes; denn ich glaube nicht, daß man in ganz Deutschland einen Schriftsteller oder irgendeinen gebildeten Menschen auftreiben kann, der die Gesamtheit der Franzosen, Russen oder Engländer für Mörder und Schurken hielte, der nicht davon überzeugt wäre, daß in jedem Volke gute neben schlechten, ehrliche neben unehrlichen und kluge neben dummen Menschen leben. Weiter aber geht die Neutralität Rollands nicht, und dafür wird er von seinen Landsleuten ans Kreuz geschlagen.¹⁸

It was for the statement of this simple and obvious truth that Romain Rolland had been persecuted, martyred by his own people, averred Schmidt. It was undoubtedly true that nowhere was Rolland's cry for tolerance so categorically rejected by mainstream criticism than in his native France.¹⁹ German commentators frequently used this example of Rolland's reception by his fellow countrymen, to demonstrate the depths of depravity to which the French intelligentsia had sunk. A public mood of such fanaticism and hysteria had been created in France that even relatively unremarkable expressions of basic human solidarity were rejected as treasonous lies.

Many German critics highlighted the subjectivity of Romain Rolland's standpoint by speaking of the disproportionate blame the French author attributed to Germany for its role in the War. According to *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, wrote Avenarius in *Der Kunstwart* in July 1915, Germany was guilty of subservience to tyranny, of complicity to criminal and barbarous acts and of moral subjugation to an aggressive imperialism:

Wir Deutschen seien ein Volk ohne Freiheit, begierig, als Knechte eines Tyrannen andre zu unterjochen, Barbaren seien wir, wir, Hunnen, ja Verbrecher, und diesen Krieg, wir hätten ihn gewollt, wir Deutschen, wir. Das begriffen und begreifen wir nicht.²⁰

Such accusations were certainly not destined to endear Rolland to the German reader. Hermann Barge, writing for *Die Hilfe* in 1916, regretted that *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* incessantly recalls the question of war guilt and persists in accusing Germany of atrocities. In such questions, Barge said, Rolland was second to none in pointing an accusatory finger at Germany:

Rolland seinerseits denkt nicht daran, irgendeinen der den Deutschen wegen ihrer Kriegführung gemachten Vorwürfe abzuschwächen, und wo er auf die Schuldfrage zu sprechen kommt - was er gern und mit Absichtlichkeit immer wieder tut - sind seine Worte ganz auf den Ton ausgelassener Tiraden grimmiger Deutschenfresser gestimmt.²¹

Hermann Barge considered Rolland's view of the Prussian State to be "maßlos übertrieben und auf einseitigen Informationen beruhend."²² He also fundamentally disagreed with what he saw as Rolland's programme for future European developments: the need to crush the Prussian military state and gain recompense for the Belgian atrocities. Such a path would merely nurture feelings of recrimination and bitterness.

Eduard von Bendemann in an article which appeared in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* on 9 January 1916, also reminded the German reader of the damage inflicted by Rolland upon Germany's image among enemy and neutral nations. Rolland's, albeit erroneous, claim to neutrality had granted him special hearing, said Bendemann, beyond that of the openly partisan French writer and he had used this supposed objectivity to castigate Germany again and again for her war-crimes, her brutal militarism, her betrayal of the idealistic Germany of old:

Ist es erlaubt, Romain Rollands Stellung in diesem Kriege überhaupt bei uns noch eines Wortes zu würdigen? Hat nicht auch er, der den Versuch machte, "über dem Getümmel" zu stehen, auf dessen Stimme daher gerade die Neutralen besonders aufmerksam waren, die Erzählungen von den deutschen "Greueln" ohne jede nähere Prüfung als wahr hingenommen, hat er nicht von vornherein alle Schuld allein bei den Deutschen gesehen?²³

And yet, he could not bring himself to castigate Romain Rolland. For, even though Rolland was seen to have consistently misused his position to chastise Germany, Bendemann and a majority of his fellow critics at this time could not help but retain a loyalty to the French writer. Their admiration focused on two points.

Firstly, they admired his courage and fortitude in the face of the opposition he had awakened in his native France. He had spoken out against Germany on many accounts, but he was perceived to be the only figure of moral stature in the French camp to insist upon the need to retain a personal and spiritual relationship with Germany, the only one not to damn Germany irrevocably. Eduard von Bendemann did not wish a German readership to forget that service:

Denn wir dürfen nicht vergessen, daß er schließlich der einzige Franzose ist, der sich nicht scheut, vor der Welt noch eine menschliche, geistige Beziehung zu uns zu bekennen, der uns nicht ganz in unserem Wesen und unseren Leistungen verdammt.²⁴

German critics acknowledged that this service, modest though it may have been, exacted a terrible price. They saw that for refusing the demands of his compatriots for total condemnation of Germany, Rolland had found himself utterly repudiated at home. This willingness to sacrifice his reputation in order to voice a human solidarity with the enemy, won him tremendous respect in Germany.

Furthermore, expressions of admiration on the part of German critics, allowed for a good deal of self-congratulation. Critics applauded themselves and their homeland for their recognition of Romain Rolland, in spite of certain anti-German sentiments. This continued loyalty was seen as proof of their equanimity, their emotional and intellectual generosity, and could be usefully contrasted to the hysteria and blind malice of France. Otto Grautoff exemplified this tendency well. Grautoff, Rolland's translator who had so bitterly reproached the French writer in March 1915 for betraying the spirit of his work, mounted a defence of Rolland in the columns of *Das literarische*

Echo from 1916 onwards. Grautoff's case was largely formulated in opposition to the reception the French author was given by the critical community in France. He recounted at some length the campaigns of Paul Hyacinthe Loyson and others to brand Romain Rolland a traitor, a coward and a conspirator.²⁵ Rolland was, Grautoff insisted, to be seen as an exceptional individual, exceptional in his rejection of hatred and fanaticism. An understanding of the very uncomfortable position Rolland held at home would, maintained Grautoff, help a German readership to appreciate the depth of anti-German feeling in France as a whole.

Romain Rolland thus came to be regarded as the exception which proved the rule. An admiration for Rolland still enabled German critics to deplore the general intellectual climate in France. Testimony to the moral depravity of France was found by Grautoff in the French national obsession with demonstrating the barbarity of the Germans. He cited as an example of this, the publication of a book documenting atrocities in Belgium: *Le Livre rouge des atrocités allemandes d'après les rapports officiels des gouvernements français, anglais et belges* (Paris 1916). The appendix to the volume, edited by the French Deputy Paul Escuder and Jean Richepin of the *Académie Française*, contained four portraits of rape scenes in two of which the German rapists appeared as apes. That, said Grautoff, was characteristic of shameless French propaganda, designed to fan the flames of hatred. In such a sea of intense ill-will, Rolland shone forth, a beacon of hope:

Betrachtet man diese und ähnliche Publikationen, die in den letzten Wochen noch durch ein ebenso abstoßendes Bilderalbum wie das obige über die deutschen Greuel in Polen vermehrt worden sind, so versteht man besser, warum ein Mann wie Romain Rolland Spott, Hohn und Haß seiner Landsleute erntet. Sie wollen nicht klar, ruhig und sachlich denken und urteilen, sondern wollen, daß alle mit dazu beitragen, daß ihre roten Haßwellen sich über Deutschland ergießen, bis der letzte Deutsche darin versunken ist.²⁶

Rolland thus became a martyr to the corruption and moral bankruptcy of the French establishment in the eyes of German critics. When one had

understood the baseness to which the French intelligentsia had sunk, they argued, one would comprehend the climate of hatred which Rolland had unwittingly provoked. Upon Rolland's receipt of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1916, Grautoff again documented the renewed accusations of treachery and artistic mediocrity. This was how France had chosen to reward one of her greatest sons:

So behandelt Frankreich seine Geistesgrößen, den wertvollsten und echten Franzosen, der die Ideale der Freiheit, Gleichheit und Brüderlichkeit nicht nur im Munde führt, sondern auch streng nach ihnen lebt und den stammverwandten Bruder, den es erst kennt, wenn es propagandistisch, politisch nutzbringend erscheint.²⁷

The depravity of France was thus measured on the towering courage and strength of a great individual. This was not a politically controversial standpoint to hold in Germany in the later war years, unlike earlier in the War. An expression of support for Romain Rolland did not undermine but rather confirmed the dominant consensus in the German-speaking world that France was a country in the grasp of mass hysteria.

This admiration for his courage and tenacity in the face of tremendous opposition at home was, secondly, coupled with the growing belief that Rolland did indeed embody the spirit of universal love, in spite of any divergent interpretations of the course of the War as such. For Friederike von Winternitz, Stefan Zweig's future bride, in a review of *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* for the Viennese periodical *Neues Frauenleben*, Rolland was an "Apostel der Gerechtigkeit."²⁸ Otto Grautoff spoke of the same sense of "weites und tiefes Menschentum und seinen Willen zur Liebe,"²⁹ which emerges from his work. Jakob Overmans in *Stimmen der Zeit* in 1916 acknowledged Rolland's "weitherzige Menschenliebe,"³⁰ in spite of expressing disappointment at his narrow understanding of German culture. Even Hermann Barge, whom we saw earlier giving vent to his annoyance at Rolland's attribution of war-guilt, praised his "ehrlichen Versöhnungswillen."³¹

The image of Romain Rolland, as one bearing light in the darkness, was used by Anselma Heine in *Westermanns Monatshefte* in 1918. She compared the Frenchman to the Greek philosopher Diogenes, to whom tradition ascribed the search for an honest man, conducted in broad daylight with a lighted lantern:

Nun kam der Krieg, und wenige Wochen nach seinem Ausbruch, inmitten der Schmähungen und Verleumdungen, die sich die Völker einander zuwerfen, beginnt er sein einsames Rufen nach Liebe und Vernunft, sein leidenschaftliches Diogenessuchen in der Dunkelheit.³²

Like Diogenes, Rolland was seen as a watchdog of public morality, exposing evil and calling mankind to redemption.

In general, a greater tolerance emerged towards the expressions of patriotism, indeed chauvinism which German readers detected in Rolland's wartime writings. Eduard Platzhoff wrote in *Die Christliche Welt* in September 1917: "Er sieht Recht und Unrecht des Krieges, Kriegsursachen und Kriegsziele mit den Augen seines Vaterlandes. Es wird ihm das Niemand verargen."³³ Otto Grautoff also asked, when reviewing Rolland's essay on Shakespeare written in celebration of the 300th anniversary of the dramatist's death in 1916: "Dürfen wir zürnen, daß die Auswahl der Zitate den französischen Patrioten verrät?" No, he concluded: "Auch Rolland ist nur ein Mensch, auch er hat seine Beschränktheiten."³⁴

This new-found tolerance characterised Rolland's German reception from the end of 1915 onwards.³⁵ The loyalty he felt towards his native France, his patriotism, on occasion his chauvinism, began to be accepted and understood. He was after all a Frenchman, German critics now conceded, profoundly attached to the traditions in which he had been raised. As Otto Grautoff had suggested, no German should expect anything other than that to be reflected in his writings.³⁶ This was an important statement of a perhaps rather obvious fact, and it contrasts sharply with earlier wartime readings of Rolland's work which, as we have seen, were rife with accusations of his treachery towards Germany. Pre-war German criticism of *Jean-Christophe*

had perhaps raised unreasonable expectations of the degree of understanding and sympathy Rolland felt for Germany. In reality, Grautoff told his readership, Rolland was neither "deutschfreundlich" nor "deutschfeindlich."³⁷ True, the French press had branded him a germanophile. That however, averred Grautoff, was merely part of a very cynical game designed to undermine Rolland's standing with his fellow-countrymen and thus limit the impact of his message.

Eduard von Bendemann characterised what he considered to be the tragedy of Rolland's position. In his quest to remain true to himself, Rolland had alienated Frenchmen and Germans alike. He had alienated the French by his stubborn insistence upon maintaining friendships in the German-speaking world and by refusing to condemn the ordinary people of Germany en masse. Yet, by insisting again and again upon the guilt born by the Triple Alliance, he caused many Germans to question their affection for him. Bendemann recognised that the French writer's soul was being torn apart by the conflicting commitments of love for his country and love of humanity:

Mit zerrissenem Herzen sieht er dem Kampfe zu wie die Frauen in Corneilles Trauerspiel. Rollands Schicksal erscheint ähnlich dem der Braut des Curiatiers, die von ihrem Bruder den Todesstoß erhält, weil sie ihm die Unmenschlichkeit in seinem Siege vorwirft und ihr Land verflucht, das solche Sieger ehrt.³⁸

Bendemann recognised that Rolland had been unwilling to sever the ties which bound him emotionally and intellectually to Germany, indeed that he had taken upon himself the ungrateful task of nurturing these spiritual bonds, even as the battle raged. That expression of loyalty, Bendemann believed, commanded a profound respect:

Wie billig ist es, dieses Schicksal zu verspotten und befriedigt zu konstatieren, daß Rolland sich "zwischen zwei Stühle gesetzt" habe, wie billig, ihn und alle, die auch bei uns noch an einer geistigen Gemeinschaft mit dem Feinde festhalten, als Schwächlinge abzutun, die einer utopischen Idee zuliebe ihr Vaterland verraten.³⁹

Romain Rolland had to be recognised, wrote Bendemann, as a very important hope for the establishment of a mutual and lasting understanding between the enemy nations at the end of the hostilities. He represented "eine Aussicht auf ein gegenseitiges Wiedererkennen und Wiederverstehen der Nationen."⁴⁰

Wilhelm Stapel, writing in *Der Kunstwart* in 1915, also saw in Rolland a man of good faith who had fallen short of his goal of objectivity, yet was desperately striving towards truth and understanding: "Den guten Willen zum Verstehn und Helfen wachzuhalten und zu fördern, daran arbeitet Rolland."⁴¹ It was this perception of Rolland's titanic struggle with himself and the world which awakened hope and which meant that Germany, in spite of her wounded pride, could not abandon him.

If anyone was capable of achieving a fuller understanding of German culture, many critics believed, then Romain Rolland was the man to do so. Felix Rosenberg hailed his potential healing influence in future Franco-German relations in the *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* in April 1915:

Vor allem aber erkenne ich den Dichter, der mit glühendem Patriotismus eine große Liebe zur Menschheit verbindet, in dem eifrigen Bemühen, auch dem Gegner gerecht zu werden, und besonders in den sehnsuchtsvollen Worten nach gegenseitiger Verständigung.⁴²

A broad cross-section of the German intelligentsia thus declared its faith in Rolland as a healing force. For all his vociferous attacks on the leadership of the Triple Alliance, Rolland had consistently refused to condemn the German people. "On fait la guerre à un état," he stubbornly insisted in "Lettre à ceux qui m'accusent" in November 1914, "on ne la fait pas à un peuple."⁴³ Thus, although now recognised as a Frenchman through and through, Rolland was also seen in Germany as one of the first great Europeans: "Die Aufrechterhaltung der Solidarität der Menschheit und vor allem der europäischen Familie ist für ihn ein unantastbares Dogma," wrote Eduard Plathhoff in September 1917.⁴⁴

Romain Rolland's support from both German nationalists such as Otto Grautoff, Hermann Barge and Eduard von Bendemann, the liberal intellectual Eduard Platzhoff and the decidedly left of centre Wilhelm Herzog, is evidence of Rolland's appeal across the political spectrum in Germany. German critics felt a growing tolerance towards the French writer as the War progressed. For in spite of the many political differences, Rolland had succeeded in communicating a sense of love and hope.

This tolerance contrasts sharply with Rolland's reception in France over the same period. Rolland's German critics were right. Nowhere was Rolland so spurned by the critical establishment than in his native France. Some sanctuary from the general hostility was accorded the writer by a group of extremely devoted French admirers. However, the spectrum of support had been considerably reduced after the publication of Rolland's essays. The idealist *Normalien* elite which had carried *Jean-Christophe* as its standard, abandoned the writer, and Rolland found himself the preserve of French socialist and pacifist circles.⁴⁵ Rolland's attempts to maintain a spiritual and intellectual internationalism were seen in France as misguided and immoral manoeuvres inspired by German propaganda. Whether wittingly or unwittingly, Rolland was deemed to have made himself the intermediary of the German propaganda machine, a lack of natural moral sensibilities preventing him from distinguishing between the executioner and his victim.⁴⁶ The Sorbonne Historian, Professor Aulard stated quite simply in *L'Information* of 6 March 1915: "Nous nous trouvons en présence d'une manoeuvre allemande s'étendant par l'intermédiaire de Romain Rolland, dans l'Europe entière."⁴⁷ France had fallen victim to a fanatical intolerance of any statement, qualified as it may have been, of solidarity with the enemy. Rolland was to feel the full fury of her displeasure at discovering such an obstinate dissenter. The climate of public hysteria in France during the war years led to a radicalisation of the reading of Rolland's essentially moderate texts. It was precisely the displeasure generated in France which was to enhance his political and literary reputation in Germany.

Early wartime reviews of the First Part of *Jean-Christophe*, were written in the wake of Rolland's exchange of letters with Gerhart Hauptmann. Parts Two and Three, published in Germany in 1917 and 1918, were received in the much more favourable climate inspired by *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*. Many German critics argued that Rolland's political essays earned *Jean-Christophe* the right to be read even at the height of Franco-German hostilities. The French writer's politics made him *persona grata* on the German literary scene.

Max Koch greeted the new volumes of *Jean-Christophe* in the *Schlesische Zeitung* in June 1918 with an appeal to the German-speaking readership. Some, Koch conceded, might argue that 1918 was not the time for the German reader to concern himself with French novels. *Jean-Christophe*, he argued, was entitled to exceptional status:

Auch wer die Überzeugung hegt, daß für die Beschäftigung mit französischen Romanen jetzt nicht eben der geeignetste Zeitpunkt sei, wird doch dem Künstlerromane Romain Rollands *Johann Christof* eine Ausnahmestellung zugestehen müssen.⁴⁸

In Hermann Hesse's opinion too, Germany was returning a service of gratitude to Rolland in continuing to publish *Jean-Christophe*. Germany had incurred a debt towards the Frenchman. "Eine Pflicht der Gerechtigkeit, ja der Dankbarkeit," wrote Hesse in June 1917, and further: "Da ist jeder Franzose, der nicht im Kriegshaß untergegangen ist, unendlich wertvoll, und unter diesen wenigen ist der Feinste und Edelste Romain Rolland."⁴⁹

Rolland's struggle to sow harmony where there was strife, represented a flame in the blackest night of despair for C F W Behl writing in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in July 1917: "Wenn irgendeiner unter den lebenden französischen Dichtern, so hat Romain Rolland das heilige Recht, auch heute von uns gehört zu werden."⁵⁰

Waldemar Bonsels also raised the question of the legitimacy of recommending *Jean-Christophe* to a German readership during a time of such

bitter strife. Yet Bonsels put a rather different emphasis on the discussion. Instead of congratulating Rolland on his continued faith in Germany, he applauded Germany for her unerring loyalty to the French writer. Acknowledging the anger of the early war years at the so-called over-indulgent attitude of German criticism towards foreign art, Bonsels now appealed to intellectual circles in Germany not to abandon one of the most fundamental cultural traditions of the nation: the ability to appreciate great works of art, irrespective of their country of origin. Receptivity to foreign art had once again become a virtue which bestowed upon Germany the status of European cultural leadership:

Ich möchte nicht, daß dieser Krieg Deutschland um die hohen Vorzüge seiner oft geschmähten Eigenschaft brächte, in seiner Achtung vor fremdem Gut an der Spitze der Völker zu stehen, in seiner Aufnahmefähigkeit voran zu sein und im Begreifen und Anerkennen alles Allgemeinen, das groß, schön und erhaben ist, das erste europäische Kulturvolk zu bleiben.⁵¹

It was in this spirit that Bonsels welcomed the continued publication of *Jean-Christophe*. It was a tribute to Germany, he believed, that after three years of brutal slaughter, the nation was able to welcome the novel with a great sense of tolerance and justice. This was even more surprising and admirable given that Volume I represented such an uncompromising analysis of German life. German criticism displayed, with its continuing interest in the novel, said Bonsels, a freedom of conscience and strength of conviction unparalleled in the Allied camp. Germany's loyalty to Rolland's *Jean-Christophe* was a measure of the intellectual equanimity of the nation at war:

Der erste Teil kam kurz vor Ausbruch des Krieges in deutscher Übersetzung heraus, und als ich ihn vor etwa drei Jahren an dieser Stelle anzeigte, hätte ich nicht für möglich gehalten, daß ein in heiligem Zorn entflammtes Deutschland nach jahrelangem, erbittertem Krieg Kraft, Freiheit und hochherzigen Gleichmut genug finden würde, dieses Werk und seine Fortsetzung gelassen und gerecht aufzunehmen.⁵²

Many German critics also took the opportunity to use Romain Rolland and his pre-war *roman fleuve* to attack France. The publication of volumes II and III of *Jean-Christophe* provided the occasion for German-speakers to demonstrate by reference to the novel the bellicosity of pre-war France and the war-guilt of her leaders. Max Koch of the *Schlesische Zeitung* highlighted what he considered to be Romain Rolland's direct accusations against the French political establishment: "Mit größter Bestimmtheit beschuldigt er auch die Frankreich beherrschenden Kliquen, daß sie mit voller Absicht einem Kriege gegen Deutschland zusteuerten."⁵³ Bonsels echoed this view. Rolland was seen to confirm in *Jean-Christophe* the German belief that it was the corruption and baseness of pre-war Paris which had dragged France into War:

Er zeigt uns den Helden in Paris, und wir erleben mit ihm in einer Kritik voll Strenge und Wahrhaftigkeit den politischen, kulturellen, literarischen und musikalischen Geist jenes Paris, dem Frankreich diesen Krieg verdankt.⁵⁴

Not that Rolland had ever sought foreign approval for his attacks upon the French political or intellectual establishment, Bonsels conceded. He believed that a profound love for France had motivated the novelist. Nevertheless, France would have done well to heed his warnings: "Dem Frankreich dieses Jahrhunderts ist kein ernsterer Richter, kein eindringlicherer Mahner, kein edelerer Freund ertanden."⁵⁵

Max Koch could understand that the depiction of the belligerence of French youth in *Jean-Christophe* might have provoked much displeasure at home after the outbreak of war. For Rolland was deemed to have laid bare the enormous burden of war-guilt which the French nation was even then vigorously denying. Rolland was seen by Koch to "confess openly" not only to the role played by a corrupt elite in steering France towards conflict with Germany, but to the widespread assent to that conflict amidst the French people:

Nach Kriegsausbruch dürfte ihm gerade dieses offene Bekenntnis besonders geschadet haben bei seine Landsleuten, die nun das unten am Bache trinkende Lamm der Trübung des oben kommenden Wassers schuldig finden möchten.⁵⁶

Jean-Christophe was thus called as evidence by Max Koch to contribute to the very bitterly contested issue of war-guilt. Unlike Karl Toth, Koch did not, it would seem, deem it necessary to mention any of those passages in the novel which directly address the question of Germany's role in the *paix armée*. This insistence upon the guilt of France, as demonstrated in the novel, became a common theme.

Some earlier reviews also used lengthy quotations from *Jean-Christophe* to corroborate a German belief that the War was the direct result of unprovoked French aggression. Charlotte Blennerhassett, writing in the *Deutsche Rundschau* and Marie von Bunsen in the *Vossische Zeitung* both cite *Jean-Christophe* in condemnation of the suppurating corruption of France and the bellicosity of French public opinion before the War. No nation had desired war as fervently as France, maintained Bunsen, and nobody had shown this more clearly than Romain Rolland:

Einzig und allein in Frankreich entsprach der Kriegsausbruch jedoch einer folgerichtigen Notwendigkeit langsamer seelischer Entwicklung. Aus vielen Äußerungen und Kundgebungen ließe sich diese Vorbereitung nachweisen; mit unheimlicher Klarheit tritt sie in dem Schlußband des tiefsten und dabei erfolgreichsten französischen Romans des letzten Jahrzehnts, im berühmten *Jean-Christophe* von Romain Rolland, zutage.⁵⁷

Bunsen cited long passages from *La nouvelle journée*, largely without comment, to depict the thirst for revenge against Germany which had asserted itself among growing sections of French youth. Here was proof beyond doubt, she asserted, that France had been arming herself for war, not simply militarily, but emotionally and intellectually. Rolland was hence seen to demonstrate, even if he did not himself approve, France's commitment to war long before the outbreak of hostilities. Doubtless these quotations from a

French novel expressing the viewpoint of an informed insider, were felt to render suggestions of French war-mongering all the more credible. *Jean-Christophe* was thus helped to exonerate Germany from her burden of war-guilt. Even though critics such as Marie von Bunsen and Waldemar Bonsels conceded that Rolland had never intended his work to be used against France, a selective reading of the text permitted just that:

Auch jene, die wie ich immer und allzeit dem Nachbarland bewundernde Anhänglichkeit bewahren werden, überrascht es, wenn bei uns harmlose Seelen gutmütig das 'arme Frankreich' bedauern. Vielleicht ist es nicht unser allergefährlichster Feind; nicht einen unserer Widersacher beseelt jedoch die gleiche, tiefgründig erbitterte Wut, keiner der vielen hat mit so planmäßiger Hingebung innerlich gerüstet.⁵⁸

Whilst some critics focused upon descriptions of public belligerence in *Jean-Christophe*, others preferred to make Rolland's portrait of a hidden France the centre of interest. If Rolland was congratulated for his portrait of belligerence, he was equally thanked for his revelation of the virtues of a purer and more noble French elite.

In reviewing *Jean-Christophe* for the *Heidelberger Neueste Nachrichten* in August 1917, Hermann Bagusche congratulated Rolland for his account of the intellectual climate of pre-war France, which he greeted as equal to earlier portraits of French society by Flaubert and Balzac. Bagusche again cited Jean-Christophe's tirades against the masters of the French artistic establishment, his vociferous condemnations of the smuttiness of some Parisian forms of entertainment considered art, most notably the theatre, and his horror at discovering the dominance of the loud and stupid over the talented and modest. Yet, wrote Bagusche, Rolland had also shown the world another side of France by allowing Christophe to be introduced to unknown, unexplored aspects of the country by Olivier Jeannin. Christophe's voyage of discovery uncovered a virtuous, hardworking and creative people not only for the hero himself but for the readership of the novel. Rolland succeeded, Bagusche believed, in provoking a German

audience into a new assessment of France. He was convinced, as were many of his fellow Germans, that this hidden France of *Jean-Christophe* did not merely exist within the novel, but was an actual physical reality, a reality which Germans could and should not ignore:

So ist auch diese Verteidigung des unbekannten Frankreich eine Anklage gegen das Sichtbare, aber es ist schön und verheißungsvoll für spätere Tage, von jenen verborgenen Strömungen reden zu hören. In den Worten Romain Rollands ist viel tapferer Glaube und eine starke Hoffnung auf bessere Tage. Man liest sie und entdeckt mit ihm ein anderes Volk, das in seinem Kern gesund blieb, aber das Gute, das es besaß, unter dem Moder der Oberfläche nicht sichtbar werden ließ.⁵⁹

Thus, whilst *Jean-Christophe* certainly represented an indictment of pre-war France in Bagusche's eyes, it was also seen as a great manifesto of hope for future Franco-German relations. In *Jean-Christophe* he read a faith in the future, a belief that these talented and modest sections of French society would overcome the corrupt leadership which had pushed France into war. The novel, Bagusche predicted, would pave the way to greater mutual understanding after the end of hostilities: "Rollands Roman ist ein Werk, das der Versöhnung zweier Nationen und dem Verständnis für deutsches Wesen in Frankreich den Weg bereiten sollte."⁶⁰

Max Koch joined in this profession of faith in *Jean-Christophe*, regarding it as a pledge, "ein Pfand,"⁶¹ to a more harmonious future for the two neighbours. Equally, Paul Bekker, writing in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in April 1918, expressed his gratitude to Rolland for providing a very intimate picture of France with which Germans were largely unfamiliar: "Rollands *Johann Christof* ist für uns ein wichtiger Wegweiser zur Erkenntnis französischen Geisteslebens."⁶² Again Romain Rolland was seen to disclose not a fictional but an actual reality: the battle by an intellectual elite against the cultural and moral dregs of French society which controlled her public institutions:

In dieser kritischen Erschließung der Kenntnis innerlichst bewegender Kräfte, die nicht vertreten werden durch die Machthaber der äußeren Gewalt, sondern mit ihnen um die Herrschaft ringen, liegt für uns die Bedeutung des rollandschen Werkes.⁶³

There were many expressions of optimism that the moral elite would succeed their corrupt predecessors and make way for a new understanding between the peoples of France and Germany. At this point in time, there was no open suggestion by these critics that Germany might also have to throw off her corrupt leadership in order to achieve just such an objective.

The most palpable proof that Rolland's hidden France did exist was found in the character of Olivier Jeannin and in the friendship depicted between Olivier and Jean-Christophe. That fictional brotherhood was seen as a pledge that the moral and intellectual elite of France and Germany would always cherish the desire for spiritual union. Anselma Heine wrote in *Westermanns Monatshefte* in November 1918 of Rolland's vision for the future:

Wenn Rolland uns dieses Freundespaar schildert, spricht er damit alle Hoffnungen und Wünsche aus, die er für ein Zusammenhalten von Frankreich und Deutschland in sich getragen hat und immer noch in sich trägt.⁶⁴

Luise Treu praised Rolland in the *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung* in January 1918 for revealing the spiritual affinity of Olivier and Christophe, whom she saw as "dieselben Urstoffe geistiger Menschlichkeit in verschiedener Fassung."⁶⁵ The friendship was seen as beautiful and prophetic and C F W Behl likewise lauded Rolland's evangelical message of love, portrayed in its most fundamental element by this friendship: "In diesem Bekenntnis erklingt des französischen Dichters hohes Evangelium - das Evangelium 'aller guten Menschen verschiedener Rassen.'"⁶⁶ Rolland was seen by these critics to have confirmed a powerful affinity between France and Germany which would penetrate the consciousness of ever greater numbers of honest people on both sides of the Rhine. They thanked him for planting a grain of hope in a time of despair. Whilst some German critics found proof of Rolland's

hidden France in Olivier Jeannin and his friendship with Christophe, many found it even more strongly in Romain Rolland himself. Rolland was seen by Hermann Hesse as an incarnation of the hidden France which he had sought to portray in *Jean-Christophe*. He represented hope for the creation of a just peace after the cataclysm of war and for the re-establishment of mutual respect which had been so badly damaged on both sides of the Rhine:

Als ein Vertreter dieses Frankreichs ist uns Romain Rolland ehrwürdig und wichtig. Möge er über die Leiden des Krieges, der auch ihm viel Leid und viel Schmutz ins Leben geworfen hat, den Mut und die Tatkraft zu seiner Mission nicht verlieren!⁶⁷

This very personal statement of faith in Rolland as a great individual, became increasingly dominant during the later war years and beyond. Anselma Heine saw Rolland's entire life as having been dedicated to the triumph of love and reason: "Sein ganzes früheres und späteres Werk, sein ganzes Leben ist nur ein Wirken für den Sieg der freien Seele."⁶⁸ He was a warrior, sent to defend the ideals of freedom, equality and fraternity: "Sein Leben wird zu einem ewigen Ansturm gegen die Macht, die sich anmaßt, Freiheit, Gleichheit und Brüderlichkeit zu unterdrücken, [...] Ein ewiger quatorze juillet, der gegen die Bastillen anstürmt."⁶⁹ Not, Heine insisted, that Rolland had ever wished to attract attention through the exploitation of his personality. Rolland may never have sought to cultivate a public interest in his person, yet that interest grew in spite of, perhaps, one might suggest, precisely because of that fact. He was admired for his indifference to public opinion, his modesty, his honesty, his simplicity. Anselma Heine herself commented at length upon Romain Rolland, the man, as she perceived him. She focused on his strength and purity of character and his ability to live up to the ideals he held. Rolland became a truly heroic figure in the eyes of many German critics in the later war years; heroic, indeed nothing short of saintly. Anselma Heine so admired Rolland's individual stand against the onslaught of mass hysteria, his absolute demand for intellectual freedom, his steadfast nature and his faith in the future, that he became in her eyes another Saint Christopher:

Auch er, ein treuer Sankt Christoph, der mit starkem Arm die ewige Liebe über den reißenden Fluß hinüberrettet: schwer und schwerer fühlt er die Last auf seinen Schultern, aber er wankt nicht. Die Vergangenheit verstehend, die Gegenwart betrachtend, bereitet er die Zukunft vor. Eine Zukunft voll Vernunft und Liebe.⁷⁰

Religious comparisons became quite common during this time. C F W Behl spoke, as we have seen earlier, of Rolland's sacred right to be heard in Germany, of his Christ-like mission to preach love among the warring nations in his "hohes Evangelium." History, contended Otto Grautoff, would come to acknowledge Rolland's truly saintly nature. "Ein seltsames Schicksal erlebt dieser Dichter," he wrote, "Er hat schweren Stand; aber die Zukunft wird ihm eine Gloriole ums Haupt winden."⁷¹

German criticism had returned to the pre-war consensus that Romain Rolland represented an outstanding moral force on the literary, and now post-1914, political scene. He was felt to tower above French and German intellectuals of all descriptions, and to represent a solitary saintly figure, doggedly committed to the propagation of brotherly love and understanding. Romain Rolland's personal standing during the War thus intensified and strengthened the impact of *Jean-Christophe*. The novel shone forth, said Behl, like a torch in the blackest night:

Einer Fackel gleich, von lauterstem Glanze beseelt, erstrahlte ein Buch des französischen Dichters Romain Rolland über all dem dunklen Irrwahn der Zeit, Mißgunst, Fremdheit, Haß und Verleumdung, die hüben wie drüben mehr als einen auch der erlesensten Geister mit Blindheit umwölkten.⁷²

In this climate of overwhelming admiration and respect for Rolland, those ideological objections to *Jean-Christophe*, voiced with such insistence by Gallwitz and others, made little impact upon German-speaking critics after the publication of Volumes II and III of the novel. A notable exception here was, of course, Karl Toth, whose lengthy diatribe "*Jean-Christophe* und die deutsche Kultur," discussed in the preceding chapter, was not published until January 1918. For the most part, however, *Jean-Christophe* was now

perceived to be a tribute to Germany and a much greater measure of tolerance was shown towards openly tendentious passages in the novel.

German-speaking critics returned to the dominant pre-war viewpoint that Rolland had achieved a considerable degree of objectivity in his attempts to depict the German people. C F W Behl spoke of Rolland's "unbestechliche Objektivität"⁷³ in this regard. The French writer was, stated another anonymous commentator in the *Kunstwart*, scrupulously even-handed in his judgements: "gegen seine Nation ebenso streng wie gegen die deutsche."⁷⁴ Anyone, this critic suggested, who was offended by *La Révolte*, in which German sentimentality is so ruthlessly analysed, should read the doubly brutal assault upon the superficiality, vanity and immorality of the French contained in *La Foire sur la Place*. The severity of Rolland's attacks on his native country were felt to give him the right to condemn certain aspects of German life. In any event, these critics did not wish to concentrate on those passages of the novel that censured Germany. They preferred to see *Jean-Christophe* as an attempt to portray the most laudable values and virtues of both people. The focus of their reading was thus quite different to Gallwitz, Toth and Geiger.

Unlike many of Romain Rolland's pre-war German critics, who had largely chosen to remain silent about negative judgements of Germany in *Jean-Christophe*, a large proportion of these later commentators were willing to address the question of the treatment of Germany with greater frankness. Felix Rosenberg, in an early commentary in the *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* in 1915, recognised that Rolland established within the novel a clear dichotomy with regard to Germany. He was seen to postulate an idealistic Germany of old which is then contrasted to a brutal post-1870 state. In so doing, Rosenberg believed, Rolland was quite simply mistaken in his assessment of modern Germany:

Rolland sieht nicht oder will nicht sehen, daß nach 1871 auch noch auf anderem als auf militärischem Gebiete in Deutschland vorbildlich gearbeitet wurde, während er ein durch die Liebe zum Heimatboden

geschärftes Auge für die Höhe der Kultur hat, zu der sich Frankreich nach dem Kriege emporgehoben hat.⁷⁵

Unlike Karl Toth, however, he did not see this as a pernicious attempt to undermine Germany. The German reader should not lose sight of the fact that Rolland creates a very similar dichotomy in the depiction of his native France, he cautioned. Olivier Jeannin is a character who represents an idealistic, pacifistic tradition in French thought and who stands in opposition to the corruption of Paris and the growing bellicosity of French youth. Thus, contended Rosenberg, while one may not agree or approve of division, it would be spurious to suggest that the image of a Germany divided projected in *Jean-Christophe* was inspired by a one-sided nationalism. Indeed, Rosenberg himself could only come to the conclusion that Rolland's basic attitude to Germany was very largely one of admiration and love:

Aber die Beobachtung der Seiten deutschen Wesens, die Rolland als unerfreulich hinstellt, tritt in seinem Werke durchaus nicht in den Vordergrund; es muß wohl auch jeder Leser diesseits des Rheins den Eindruck gewinnen, daß das Ganze eine Empfindung freundlichen, um nicht zu sagen, liebevollen Interesses für deutsches Wesen durchweht.⁷⁶

Eduard Wechßler also took up this question of the nation divided in a very interesting discussion of the changing image attributed to Germany in French literature, *Die Franzosen und wir* (1915). Rolland was seen by Wechßler to have followed in the same tradition as that established by Mme de Staël and upheld by Ernest Renan and Victor Hugo in their portraits of Germany. Each of these writers had seen Germany as a land of *Dichter und Denker* in which art, poetry, philosophy and scholarship took precedence over politics and national ambition. That image, argued Wechßler, was in Rolland's opinion, a projection of Germany at her purest. The power-hungry politicians and statesmen of the post-Sedan era were thus guilty of betraying the true role of Germany in Europe, both in Rolland's view as in Renan's and Hugo's eyes before him. Yet, argued Wechßler, neither Rolland's portrait of modern Germany, nor his conception of the older nation had their basis in

reality. They were both essentially creations of the French author's imagination:

Aber beides, das alte und das neue Deutschland, kennt der französische Dichter nicht eigentlich aus der Nähe. Beides erscheint ihm mehr nur wie ein Traumbild: jenes romantisch verklärt, wie schon Frau von Stael es gesehen hatte; dieses geschaut mit den Augen des vaterlandflüchtigen Empörers, des *Révolté*, hinter dem sich der Franzose oft nur notdürftig versteckt.⁷⁷

The question of the validity of Rolland's vision of Germany has, as Wechßler insisted, to be seen in the context of all the other images portrayed by the Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century French intelligentsia, in which Germany was not perceived as an integral historical entity but reduced, or one might say exalted, to the achievements of her great artists. Thus, when Rolland contrasted the great masters of the early Nineteenth Century with the politicians of the post-1870 era, he was clearly not comparing like with like.

It is interesting to note that Jean-Marie Carré, writing over forty years later and representing a French rather than a German perspective on this question, came to very similar conclusions. In *Les écrivains français et le mirage allemand 1800 - 1940*, Carré plotted the course of Germany's standing in French intellectual circles. This is a complex and fascinating area which requires study in its own right. The present work can only touch on some of the issues involved and hope to raise questions more adequately dealt with elsewhere. Carré, as Eduard Wechßler, commenced with reference to the tremendously influential Mme de Staël and her account of Germany, *De l'Allemagne* (Paris 1859). She, noted Carré, just as the French intellectuals who concerned themselves with Germany after her, was highly selective in her choice of representative symbols and characteristics, isolating from the complex and evolving landscape that was Germany mere cameos. Thus, the French admired Germany through Mme de Staël as the inspirational home of poetry; through the *Restauration* poets as the birthplace of Romanticism; through Cousin as the sanctuary of metaphysics; through Michelet, Taine

and Renan as the home of science and scholarship, and through the Symbolist poets as the Valhalla of music.⁷⁸ Carré contested that while all of these cameos may have been valid in themselves, the error of judgement came in attributing to them a totality which they did not and could not possess. The French intelligentsia seemed determined, he believed, to measure Germany as a whole, solely by reference to the activities of her intellectual and cultural elite:

Jusqu'à la cruelle révélation de 1870, et même encore après, nos poètes, nos philosophes, nos historiens, nos artistes ont confondu, consciemment ou non, l'Allemagne totale avec un de ses aspects privilégiés, l'Allemagne qui pense avec l'Allemagne tout court.⁷⁹

Once Germany had been forged into a nation with pretensions to European power, however, French intellectuals floundered in disbelief; the Germany of Bismarck and the *Kaiserreich* was not the Germany they felt they had known. After 1870 they began to speak of betrayal, and rather than admit that their vision of Germany had been too narrow, they created the concept of two Germanies, in order to preserve their long cherished image of Germany as the land of *Dichter und Denker*. In their minds, a new and brutal *Machtstaat* now confronted an abandoned ideal and, one might say, mythical past.

French intellectuals had been forced to change their perspective after 1870. Although Rolland belonged to this post-Sedan generation, he too clung to the notion of an ideal Germany. His Germany of old again took no account of the country as an historical entity, particularly surprising since Rolland was an historian by education. "La vieille et bonne Allemagne" represented for him Beethoven, Händel, Mozart, Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Kant; the great masters of the past.⁸⁰ Nowhere did the wars of liberation, Metternich, or the 1848 revolution enter Rolland's depiction of pre-1870 Germany. One cannot help but note their curious absence, as René Cheval highlighted:

Dans 'la vieille et bonne Allemagne', tout se passe comme s'il n'y avait pas de peuple [...] les âmes héroïques occupent toute la scène, elles seules semblent donner le ton à leur époque. A en croire Romain

Rolland, cinquante ans d'histoire allemande, au tournant du XVIIIe et du XIXe siècle, s'exprimeraient en Mozart et Beethoven, en Goethe et Schiller.⁸¹

Rolland's image of pre-Sedan Germany was undoubtedly historically vague and highly selective. Yet his portrait contained a moral imperative which fascinated a German readership, regardless of its historical limitations. For in Germany's great masters of scholarship and art, Rolland identified a moral force, an ideal, which had to be harnessed in order to influence the reality of the present. The moral and creative courage of the German masters was to inspire the Europe of the future.

It was that demand which struck such a poignant chord in the hearts of the German intelligentsia. It touched Eduard Wechßler as it did Felix Rosenberg and many of their colleagues. Rosenberg remarked that even if Rolland had not permitted Jean-Christophe to praise Germany to the same extent as he had allowed Olivier to eulogise France, no-one could accuse the French author of failing to acknowledge the greatness of German Idealism. The creation of Jean-Christophe, and the attribution to him of what were considered specifically German qualities was sufficient testimony to this. Rosenberg identified these German characteristics as strength of character, optimism, loyalty and integrity and he concluded: "das sind alles Züge, die wir als deutsch empfinden, und die ihn unserem Herzen nahe bringen."⁸² Jean-Christophe was once again welcomed as a representative of Germany, a tribute to the nation, a German hero. Although Eduard Wechßler acknowledged that much of the inspiration for Christophe's personality had come from within Romain Rolland's own breast, he had been driven by a love of three qualities which he found to be sadly lacking in his contemporary compatriots:

Ein Dreifaches vermißt Romain Rolland an der überwiegenden Mehrzahl seines Volks, drei Fähigkeiten der Seele: gesunde Urkraft, schlichte Wahrhaftigkeit und den festen Glauben an das Göttliche, der den Menschen in ein höheres, geistiges Dasein hinaufhebt und verklärt.⁸³

These qualities Rolland found, Wechßler believed, in German morality: "Deutsch ist der Liebling seiner Seele, deutsch bis ins Mark [...] Deutsch ist das Leben in den poetisch schönsten Teilen des Ganzen."⁸⁴ As such, Rolland could have paid no greater tribute to Germany or her culture.

And yet, although *Jean-Christophe* had undoubtedly returned to favour in ideological terms, there were a growing number of German critics who began to question the value of the novel in literary and artistic terms. In a review published in the *Neue Rundschau* in August 1918, the poet Oskar Loerke voiced his objection to the numerous comparisons of Rolland with the great German masters. Such comparisons could only disappoint the German reader, he believed. *Jean-Christophe*, in his estimation, could never hope to equal the great *Bildungsromane* of Goethe and Gottfried Keller: "Als Materialsammlung ist er diesen Werken vielleicht noch überlegen, als Dichtung bleibt er tief unter ihnen."⁸⁵ The "German heralds" of Rolland's novel had effectively destroyed the impact of the work by such exaggerated comparisons:

Die deutschen Herolde ausländischer Dichtung sorgen für unsere Enttäuschung. Was durch seinen eigenen Rang wirken könnte, wird durch übertreibende Vergleichung mit Hauptwerken der Weltliteratur eingeführt und seiner unverstellten Sprache zu den Urteilsfähigen beraubt.⁸⁶

Rolland, concluded Loerke, was no Goethe or Keller, and his work suffered in any such comparison.

Loerke saw Rolland as a greater critical spirit than poet, describing *Jean-Christophe* as "mehr Musik- oder Literaturgeschichte als Roman."⁸⁷ He judged Rolland to be relatively unskilled at describing psychological changes and developments in his characters, and lamented what he described as the absence of a sense of evolution, the "Darstellung des Werdens."⁸⁸ Even the character of Christophe appeared to him to be seriously flawed in this regard. It was clear that Rolland had used extremely diverse biographical details,

extracted from the lives of some of the greatest German composers, most notably Beethoven. This method of intertwining what Loerke regarded as essentially incongruous facets of a number of different personalities fell far short of creating a satisfactory representation of German genius. Jean-Christophe's involvement with two violent deaths also considerably undermined the moral claim of the novel's hero, drawing the following ironic comment: "Unter den deutschen künstlerischen Genies jedenfalls ist er einigermaßen ein Neuling: er tritt mitunter unangenehm teutonisch auf und schlägt leicht jemand aus Versehen tot."⁸⁹

The development of Jean-Christophe's character was seen by Loerke as having been portrayed with mechanical precision and he disapproved strongly of the way in which Rolland often interrupted the account of the psychological evolution of his hero with long treatises on the state of modern literature, modern society, or modern life. That, he maintained to be a critical, rather than a poetic device. He was forced to conclude that *Jean-Christophe* is not so much a novel in any traditional sense, but a vehicle for Romain Rolland's world view. To compound this "fault", that world view was sometimes filled with *petit bourgeois* sentimentality which stifled poetry:

Weichliche Sentimentalität hält uns manchmal hilflos im allzu kleinbürgerlich Engen, eine oft nur physiologische Begeisterung verläßt uns hilflos im allzu leeren Allgemeinen. So gewinnt uns Erfindung und Durchführung des eigentlich Poetischen selten.⁹⁰

Loerke did consider *Jean-Christophe* a very important novel in spite of its many 'imperfections'. He categorically rejected the contention, however, that Rolland was a great poet and he castigated those fellow German critics who established untenable literary comparisons and lavished wholly uncritical praise upon the novel. It was not justifiable to laud Rolland as a great author, Loerke argued, simply because one regarded him as a great advocate of human freedom and justice. Art could not be measured by the humanity of its author:

Für sein europäisches Manifest danken wir ihm, um seines Herzens willen lieben wir ihn [...], aber vor dem Urwesen der Dichtung sind Freundschaft und Zwist der Staaten nicht so groß wie das Gedicht.⁹¹

Adolf Lapp, writing in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in May 1918, likewise considered the term poetic to be an unsuitable adjective to describe *Jean-Christophe*. The novel, he believed, contained passages, indeed whole chapters which, viewed from a strictly aesthetic point of view, marred the structure of the work itself. Again the charge of sentimentality arose. Lapp spoke of the "lyrische Hingegebenheiten, die an Sentimentalität, weitschichtige Betrachtungen, die an Geschwätzigkeit grenzen."⁹² Rolland did not give sufficiently thorough treatment to central figures and revelled in the creation of an army of peripheral characters who added nothing to the work as a whole.

Lapp also questioned an extreme subjectivity in the narrative of *Jean-Christophe*. Such was the degree of authorial intervention, he argued, that the novel assumed the air of a diary. Part Three was particularly guilty of this, with the inclusion of countless unrelated episodes which completely exploded the artistic unity of the work. Lapp considered Rolland more of a "kultivierten, welterfahrenen und philosophischen Feuilletonist,"⁹³ than an author of great literary standing. The discussion in *Jean-Christophe* of the burning issues of the day, of politics, religion and literature, always appeared extraneous to the development of the main characters. Lapp described his enjoyment of the depiction of the friendship between Jean-Christophe and Olivier as considerable. Yet he felt compelled to condemn the manner in which even this most powerful of relationships degenerates into endlessly tiresome theoretical debate.

The best episode from a literary perspective, said Lapp, and here he is joined by several other German colleagues, is the encounter between Jean-Christophe and Anna Braun in *Le Buisson Ardent*. These pages were felt to demonstrate Rolland's talents as an artist admirably. They also served to highlight the limitations of the rest of the work. The excellence of those scant hundred pages, averred Lapp, mercilessly exposed the inadequacy of

the remaining ten thousand: "Nirgends offenbart sich kraftvoller Romain Rollands schöpferische Persönlichkeit, aber nirgends auch werden einem die Grenzen dieses Buches deutlicher bewußt."⁹⁴ *Jean-Christophe* thus represented for Adolf Lapp an artistic blunder, a demonstration of the French author's "Mangel an künstlerischer Zucht und Selbstbeherrschung."⁹⁵

Indeed, it is interesting to note that this lack of clarity of form, considered by the French critic Le Cardonnell in 1912 as so typically German, was to be branded by Christian Boeck as intrinsically French. Just as Oskar Loerke and Adolf Lapp, Boeck saw the novel as too subjective and many of the characters as flat and lifeless. Rolland's talent, he suggested, was too French. For, although he displayed great psychological insight into his characters, he deprived them of a sense of wholeness and uniqueness:

Eben die hervorragende psychologische Fähigkeit, die ohne Zweifel ein Merkmal französischen Geistes ist, hat den Dichter dazu verführt, zu viel, oder vielmehr zu vielerlei zu sehen, so daß in vielen Fällen nachher die Einheitlichkeit und die Abgeschlossenheit fehlt, die uns die dichterischen Gestalten erst wahrhaft lebendig erscheinen läßt.⁹⁶

Romain Rolland's characteristically French command of the psychology of his characters was felt by Boeck to inhibit the development of his poetic skill, and the critic used here an anatomical comparison to illustrate his point. Boeck likened Rolland's fictional creations to diagrams of the human nervous system, shown in the minutest detail. Yet in spite of, or rather because of this tremendous proliferation of detail, the reader was unable to put a face to his characters. Rolland's appeal was thus, as in so much of French literature, constantly to the intellect and not to the heart: "Es wiegt überall das rein Intellektuelle und Verstandesmäßige vor, und auch diese Erscheinung müssen wir als einen Ausfluß des romanischen Geistes ansprechen."⁹⁷ A certain literary excellence had indeed been achieved by the pursuit of such methods, but not, argued Boeck, truly great literature. Boeck drew literary comparisons between Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, a comparison which would have alienated many French traditionalist critics. He perceived, however, a striking similarity in the

authorial stance and the structure of these works. He objected in both instances to the omniscience of the author and his inexorable exercise of knowledge and power over the lives of individual characters. This sensation, with Rolland as with Flaubert, of complete authorial control, argued Boeck, had the effect of alienating the reader emotionally. That vital quality, the "Beseelung und die Mitgift des Herzblutes,"⁹⁸ as he termed it, was missing.

Volume VI, *Antoinette*, best exemplified the literary failings of *Jean-Christophe* in particular and the French novel in general to this German critic. The structure and execution of this volume was excellent, Boeck conceded; it was in his view truly exemplary in the clarity and beauty of its descriptions of human sacrifice and suffering. And yet *Antoinette* failed to move the reader to a sense of empathy, he averred, precisely because he remained too aware of the constant manipulative presence of the author. He was witness not to a human drama, but to a beautifully executed puppet theatre. Boeck lamented the pernicious influence of stylistic questions on French writing and on that of its imitators:

Ist die französische Kultur zu klug und zu alt geworden, daß sie diese Form der Kunst als die höchste preisen muß, ahmen ihre Nachahmer in Deutschland auch Klugheit und Alter nach, da sie in sich selbst den Quell der jugendfrischen Kunst versiegen fühlen?⁹⁹

The insistence on beauty of execution, Boeck believed, would lead to the death of poetry. It is interesting to see here how many of Rolland's own arguments against French art have been turned against *Jean-Christophe*. The novel which was so consciously fashioned against literary convention in France, was now made to stand as yet another example of the pre-eminence of stylistic concerns in French literature.

As the War progressed, Rolland became an ever more important figure to German literary and political commentators. He was seen as tangible proof that the French were capable of achieving an understanding of, and developing a love for their neighbour across the Rhine. Not as a writer, but as a man, he was given a cult status which identified him as one of the

greatest figureheads of First World War. In the German camp, his name came to symbolise opposition to all human suffering and hatred; he was seen as an embodiment of peace, love, understanding and harmony.

There were those in Germany who were still alienated by the subjective tinge which accompanied his exhortations to greater understanding. There were those who saw Rolland's interpretation of the causes and conduct of the War, as expressed in *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, as being profoundly anti-German. And yet through this mantle of misunderstandings, shone Rolland's love for humanity. There were few German critics able to resist the lure of that beacon. Rolland exercised considerable influence over a broad section of the German political spectrum from nationalist to pacifist. In France, meanwhile, his appeal had been narrowed to pacifist and socialist circles.

The recognition of Romain Rolland as a great individual boded well for the continued reception of *Jean-Christophe* after the war years. His attempt at a supra-national stance was felt to earn for his work a special place in the heart of the German reader. Indeed, *Jean-Christophe* was very broadly welcomed as a remarkable portrait of German genius. Charges by earlier critics of ignorance and bias in the treatment of Germany within the novel faded into the background, and into the foreground strode the ideal of Franco-German harmony as embodied by Jean-Christophe Krafft and Olivier Jeannin. The dominant ideology of the work was thus perceived, as in the pre-war era, to be the pursuit of understanding between the French and German peoples.

Although the later wartime critics did largely share this consensus on Rolland's ideological intentions in *Jean-Christophe*, significant divergences of opinion began to appear in the evaluation of the literary merit of the novel. The work which had appeared to earlier German critics to be a great work of art, now became stylistically questionable, lacking in artistry. Would German critics eventually come to the same conclusions as so many of their French colleagues, that *Jean-Christophe* was the work of a very well-intentioned but second-rate author? *Jean-Christophe*'s fate in the Weimar Republic will be discussed in the next section.

Notes

- 1 Behl, C F W: "Das Evangelium Romain Rollands." In: *Berliner Tageblatt*, vol. XLVI, 16 July 1917, erstes Beiblatt.

- 2 The Rolland articles published by Wilhelm Herzog are:

 "Über dem Ringen." In: *Das Forum*, vol I, no 9, December 1914, pp 482 - 489.

 "Unser Nächster, der Feind." In: *Das Forum*, vol I, no 12, March 1915, pp 639 - 650.

 "Für Europa." Ibid, pp 651 - 653.

- 3 Translated as: "Glaube und Hoffnung." In: *Die weißen Blätter*, vol III, 1916, pp 92 - 93.

- 4 Rolland, Romain: *JAG*, p 439. Rolland wrote: "Ernst Joël de Charlottenburg m'écrit (2 juillet), que mon 'Appel à la jeunesse héroïque d' Europe' (traduit par Gustav Landauer et republié dans le *Sozialist*) a 'ému et enthousiasmé une grande partie de la jeunesse allemande.'"

- 5 Grautoff, Otto: "Französischer Brief." In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XIX, no 7, 1 January 1917, col 443. Grautoff wrote: "Die Zensur hat die Auszüge aus 'Au-dessus de la Mêlée' verboten. Die im Ausland so arg verschriene deutsche Zensur hat dieses wahrhaft nicht deutschfreundliche Buch nicht einmal überarbeitet, und ich weiß, daß in deutschen Schützengräben ebensowohl 'Au-dessus de la Mêlée' als auch 'Johann Christof' und Verhaerens Gedichte vielfältig gelesen werden. Das ist 'Barbarenart'."

- 6 Herzog, Wilhelm: "Sintflut." In: *Das Forum*, vol I, no 9, December 1914, p 445.

- 7 Ibid.

- 8 Mann, Thomas: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. S Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1983, p 163. (Hereafter referred to as *Betrachtungen*). First published in 1918.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Rolland, Romain: "Les Idoles." In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 90.
- 11 Mann, Thomas: *Betrachtungen*, p 168.
- 12 Ibid, p 178.
- 13 Paul Amann told (in the *Münchener Blätter für Dichtung und Graphik*, vol I, nos 2 & 3, 1919 in an article entitled "Politik und Moral in Thomas Manns *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*") of how he had approached Thomas Mann in 1913 with the manuscript of an essay on Romain Rolland which he hoped to publish. Mann promised to intervene for Paul Amann in order to assist publication in the *Neue Rundschau*. The essay contained many quotations from personal correspondence addressed to Amann from Rolland. This was Thomas Mann's undeclared private source.
- 14 Ibid, p 46.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid, p 42.
- 17 Mann, Thomas: *Betrachtungen*, p 181.
- 18 Schmidt, Karl Eugen: "Ein neutraler Franzose." In: *Dresdner Neueste Nachrichten*, 13 February 1916, Unterhaltungsbeilage.
- 19 See: Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle*, pp 227 - 249. Jeanneret detailed the repugnance of French critics at discovering a pacifist within their midst. The reaction to this "betrayal" led to a radicalisation in the reading of Romain Rolland's essentially very moderate texts.
- 20 Avenarius, Ferdinand: "Parlamentäre der Unbewaffneten." In: *Der Kunstwart*, vol XXVIII, no 20, July 1915, p 42.

- 21 Barge, Hermann: "Romain Rolland und wir." In: *Die Hilfe*, no 13, 30 March 1916, p 210.
- 22 Ibid, p 211.
- 23 Bendemann, Eduard von: "Über dem Getümmel." In: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, vol LX, no 8, 9 January 1916, p 1.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Grautoff, Otto: "Französischer Brief." In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XVIII, no 17, 1 June 1916, cols 1081 - 1083.
- 26 Grautoff, Otto: "Französischer Brief." In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XIX, no 4, 15 November 1916, col 245.
- 27 Grautoff, Otto: "Französischer Brief." In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XIX, no 7, 1 January 1917, col 443.
- 28 Winternitz, Friederike von: "Romain Rollands 'Über dem Gemenge'." In: *Neues Frauenleben*, vol XVIII, no 1, 1916/1917, p 15.
- 29 Grautoff, Otto: "Französischer Brief." In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XVIII, no 17, 1 June 1916, col 1082.
- 30 Overmans, Jakob: "Romain Rollands Stellung zwischen den Nationen." In: *Stimmen der Zeit*, vol XLVI, no 6, 1916.
- 31 Barge, Hermann: "Romain Rolland und wir," p 210.
- 32 Heine, Anselma: "Romain Rollands Werk, Wesen und Wirken." In: *Westermanns Monatshefte*, vol CXXV, no 1, November 1918, p 295.
- 33 Platzhoff, Eduard: "Romain Rolland und der Krieg." In: *Die Christliche Welt*, vol XXXI, no 39, 27 September 1917, col 704.
- 34 Grautoff, Otto: "Französischer Brief." In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XVIII, no 17, 1 June 1916, col 1083.

35 There were, as we have seen, some earlier examples of support for Rolland in the German camp. Wilhelm Herzog has already been mentioned in this regard. A consistent trend towards viewing Rolland's interventions as positive began to emerge, however, in the second year of the War.

36 Grautoff, Otto: "Französischer Brief." In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XVIII, no 17, 1 June 1916, col 1083.

37 Ibid.

38 Bendemann, Eduard von: "Über dem Getümmel."

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid.

41 Stapel, Wilhelm: "An Romain Rolland." In: *Der Kunstwart*, vol XXVIII, no 20, July 1915, p 59.

42 Rosenberg, Felix: "Franzosen und Deutsche in Romain Rollands *Jean-Christophe*." In: *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, vol VII, no 4, April 1915, p 212.

43 Rolland, Romain: "Lettre à ceux qui m' accusent." In: *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, p 79.

44 Platzhoff, Eduard: "Romain Rolland und der Krieg," col 705.

45 For a detailed analysis of Rolland's wartime reception in France, see: Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi-siècle*, pp 227 - 290.

46 At Henri Guilbeaux' trial for treason in February 1918, Rolland was described by the prosecution witness, Commissioner Faralicq, as a writer who lacked moral stature "puisque il n' a pas pu faire la différence entre le bourreau et la victime, et qu'il a cru pouvoir ne servir que l' art en déservant la France." From: *Revue des causes célèbres politiques et criminelles*, 23 March 1919, p 109. Report delivered to the *Troisième Conseil de Guerre* in the trial of Henri Guilbeaux.

47 Quoted after: Jeanneret, Ives: *Un demi- siècle*, p 240.

- 48 Koch, Max: "Ein französisch-deutscher Roman." In: *Schlesische Zeitung*, 16 June 1918.
- 49 Hesse, Hermann: "Johann Christof in Paris." In: *März*, vol XI, no 26, 30 June 1917, p 616.
- 50 Behl, C F W: "Das Evangelium Romain Rollands."
- 51 Bonsels, Waldemar: Romain Rollands *Johann Christof*." In: *Tägliche Rundschau*, 16 November 1917, Unterhaltungsbeilage.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Koch, Max: "Ein französisch-deutscher Roman."
- 54 Bonsels, Waldemar: "Romain Rollands *Johann Christof*."
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Koch Max: "Ein französisch-deutscher Roman."
- 57 Bunsen, Marie von: "Das verwandelte Frankreich." In: *Vossische Zeitung*, 2 May 1915, vierte Beilage.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Bagusche, Hermann: "Johann Christof in Paris." In: *Heidelberger Neueste Nachrichten*, 22 August 1917.
- 60 Ibid.
- 61 Koch, Max: "Ein französisch-deutscher Roman."
- 62 Bekker, Paul: "Johann Christof und seine Sendung." In: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, no 59, 1918. Reprinted in: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XX, no 13, 1 April 1918, col 801.
- 63 Ibid.

- 64 Heine, Anselma: "Romain Rollands Werk, Wesen und Wirken," p 293.
- 65 Treu, Luise: "Johann Christof in Paris." In: *Berliner Börsen-Zeitung*, 6 January 1918, erste Beilage.
- 66 Behl, C F W: "Das Evangelium Romain Rollands."
- 67 Hesse, Hermann: "Johann Christof in Paris," p 617.
- 68 Heine, Anselma: "Romain Rollands Werk, Wesen und Wirken," p 294.
- 69 Ibid, pp 294 - 295.
- 70 Ibid, p 296.
- 71 Grautoff, Otto: "Französischer Brief." In: *Das literarische Echo*, vol XX, no 3, 1 November 1917, col 170.
- 72 Behl, C F W: "Das Evangelium Romain Rollands."
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Anon: "Von Romain Rolland, dem 'Absager'." In: *Der Kunstwart*, vol XXVIII, no 2, October 1914, p 61.
- 75 Rosenberg, Felix: "Franzosen und Deutsche in Romain Rollands *Jean-Christophe*," p 205.
- 76 Ibid, p 211.
- 77 Wechßler, Eduard: *Die Franzosen und wir. Der Wandel in der Schätzung deutscher Eigenart*. Eugen Diederichs, Jena 1915, p 30.
- 78 Carré, Jean-Marie: *Les écrivains français et le mirage allemand 1800 - 1940*. Boivin et Cie, Paris 1947, p xi.
- 79 Ibid.

- 80 See: Cheval, René: *Romain Rolland*, pp 218 - 228.
- 81 Ibid, p 221.
- 82 Rosenberg, Felix: "Franzosen und Deutsche in Romain Rollands *Jean-Christophe*," p 206.
- 83 Wechßler, Eduard: *Die Franzosen und wir*, p 27.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Loerke, Oskar: "Johann Christof." In: *Die Neue Rundschau*, vol XXIX, no 8, August 1918, p 1117.
- 86 Ibid, p 1116.
- 87 Ibid, p 1118.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 Ibid, p 1117.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Ibid, p 1119.
- 92 Lapp, Adolf: "Johann Christof am Ziel." In: *Berliner Tageblatt und Handelszeitung*, 27 May 1918, Abendausgabe, p 2.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Boeck, Christian: "Ein deutsch-französischer Roman." In: *Preußische Jahrbücher*, vol CLXXI, 1918, p 46.
- 97 Ibid, p 47.

98 Ibid, p 48.

99 Ibid.

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Chapter V

JEAN-CHRISTOPHE: THE TURN OF THE SCHOLARS

Wenn die wahre Definition des
Dichters die ist, die ihn einen
Schöpfer von Leben nennt, so ist
Romain Rolland ein Dichter.¹

After the Armistice, the interest in Romain Rolland and *Jean-Christophe* among German-speaking critics intensified and a number of works were published which offered new perspectives on both the novel and the man. Much of the criticism which has been considered thus far was published in journals and newspapers in review or essay form. Now came the turn of the academics, university professors and doctoral candidates. They dedicated books and theses to Rolland and were thus able to discuss his work in far greater depth than had hitherto been possible. These German scholars began to look for timeless messages within the novel, offering fewer temporal or political interpretations. The liberal humanism which informed their analyses necessarily led to a substantial change in critical focus.

The cultural and social portrait of Germany hitherto considered pre-eminent, was now judged to be only one of many themes and, for some critics, one of merely secondary importance. Earlier chapters of this study have shown how *Jean-Christophe* had prompted a tremendous emotional response among German critics with its insistence upon the urgent need for Franco-German understanding. Indeed, in most early thematic analyses, this need had largely been seen by German criticism to constitute the overwhelming message of *Jean-Christophe*. During the Weimar Republic, the question of international reconciliation assumed a somewhat changed character. The urgency of the

message had not diminished, on the contrary, Franco-German co-operation was still undoubtedly seen as the very touchstone of a peaceful and stable Europe by intellectuals of many different persuasions. The horror of four years of slaughter and the imposition of a vengeful, punishing peace would, however, lead to a greater sense of pessimism and cynicism. In this atmosphere, *Jean-Christophe*'s message of understanding became a more distant vision. The belief had been destroyed for good, perhaps, that any work of literature, even one as powerful as *Jean-Christophe*, could hope to change the course of events in the real world.²

These academics of the Weimar era began to question Romain Rolland's authorial intent in *Jean-Christophe*. Only thus, they maintained, could one understand the significance of the German question to the novel. In a detailed and sensitive study, *Romain Rolland und die Erneuerung der Gesinnung* (1926), Eugen Lerch described what he believed to be the inspiration for *Jean-Christophe*. He acknowledged that the creation of an enduring portrait of France and Germany was one of the great challenges and achievements of the work. That Rolland had sought to demonstrate the interdependency of the two nations was seen as much to his credit. Yet, argued Lerch, these concerns were merely interesting and engaging by-products, the primary intent behind the novel being to portray the development of a musical genius from cradle to grave. Rolland had never intended to pit France and Germany against one another, but to pit Jean-Christophe against the abominations of an age of sceptical materialism: "Johann-Christoph ist im Wesentlichen der geniale Künstler, der Gotterfüllte; sein Deutschtum ist nur Nebenumstand."³

Indeed, the portraits of France and Germany in the novel seemed ultimately to divert the reader's attention from this principal conflict. German readers expected a fair, accurate and in-depth study of Germany in the novel and, as we have seen, many declared themselves to be disappointed with the results. Lerch was however at pains to demonstrate that their dissatisfaction had its source in misunderstandings and false expectations for Rolland had never intended his novel to be a cultural and historical study of Germany:

Man übersah vor allem, daß der *Johann-Christoph* seiner ganzen Absicht nach gar keine kulturhistorische Studie über Deutschland sein will, und daß daher irgendwelche Vollständigkeit in der Bestandsaufnahme des deutschen Wesens gar nicht angestrebt wird und deshalb auch nicht erwartet werden darf.⁴

To ignore the deeply autobiographical nature of the novel, Lerch cautioned, was to misunderstand it fundamentally. Jean-Christophe, the inspired genius, was inevitably none other than Rolland himself. Rolland had wished to disguise his presence in the work, however, because he was too modest, too reserved to take centre stage. He therefore searched for someone greater than himself with whom he felt a deep affinity and who would be capable of embodying the ideals of a generation. Beethoven was Rolland's natural choice and hence, argued Lerch, his protagonist was to be a German musical genius:

Der Roman ist also die Antwort auf die Frage: Was würde Beethoven sagen, wenn er all diesen Plunder sähe, der sich heute Kunst und Kultur nennt? (In allen Ländern - in Frankreich wie in Deutschland).⁵

It was then Rolland's choice of character that had forced him into an exploration of France and Germany as cultural and political entities. Lerch acknowledged, just as some of his much less sympathetic German critics had pointed out earlier, that the need to understand and describe the Germany in which Jean-Christophe was to grow up left Rolland with a considerable problem. Since he knew little of contemporary Germany, he was obliged to supplement this somewhat patchy knowledge with information gleaned from his study of the life and times of Germany's great composers. Beethoven, Jean-Christophe's principal role model had, however, lived a century before the time Rolland wished to describe. It was for this reason, argued Lerch, that *Jean-Christophe* contained the many anachronisms lambasted by some of his critics in the German-speaking world.

The traditions of different epochs intermingle on occasion uncomfortably, admitted Lerch, creating unacceptable, sometimes ridiculous scenarios. One example consistently cited as anachronistic by German speakers was Jean-Christophe's letter to Grand Duke Leopold where Rolland had used almost word for word a letter composed by Beethoven in 1783 to the Archbishop and Crown Prince of Cologne. The tone of the letter appeared too servile, too fawning to be credible in the mid-Nineteenth Century said his critics. Had Rolland set the novel around 1800, argued Lerch, he would have been able to eliminate many of the historically stray elements. Jean-Christophe's life, according to the conception of the novel, however, was to span the era 1845 to 1910 in order that Christophe might judge contemporary society and die an old man around 1910. Romain Rolland should not therefore, in the interests of historical accuracy, have portrayed the young Jean-Christophe walking out of a Wagner concert in which the Pilgrim's Chorus from *Tannhäuser* (1845) was on the programme; Minna could not have possessed a picture of the *Festspielhaus* in Bayreuth which was first opened in 1876 and Richard Strauss, born in 1863, should not have figured in Christophe's youth at all. The list of such anachronisms is longer and many more were highlighted by Elise Richter in her 1920 study of the novel in the *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*.⁶

For Lerch, these historical errors held little significance since the novel did not lay claim to being a realist novel and the time dimension was ideal not real. Rolland had taken only the same liberties as those taken by the Classicists, indeed by every artist until the advent of Realism. These criticisms belonged, in Lerch's opinion, to an epoch which demanded a quasi-photographic representation of the external world. Literary greatness could not be measured by the use of anachronistic detail, he said, such demands upon literature were in themselves transient. In time, the anachronisms of *Jean-Christophe* would be forgotten, and Rolland's portrait of the struggle of the great individual with himself and with his time would remain beautiful, eternal. That was, for Lerch, the very core of the work:

Für Romain Rolland ist das Zeitliche nur Vorwand, nur Kleid, nur Beiwerk. Das Zeitliche erhebt er ins Ewige. Das zeitlose Thema des

"Johann Christoph" ist der Kampf des genialen Menschen mit seiner Zeit und mit sich selbst.⁷

Walther K  chler, in his 1919 study of the novel, also defended the Frenchman against those who felt his portrait of Germany prejudiced and unfair. K  chler argued that in many instances, Rolland used attacks upon aspects of German life as articulated by a number of great German composers, thereby demonstrating that the Frenchman had relied upon very real German historical sources. As a scholar of music, Rolland was intimately acquainted with the correspondence of Jean-Christophe's role models who were to be found not only in Beethoven but also in Hugo Wolf and Richard Wagner. K  chler was able to show that Christophe's hatred of Brahms, for which the Frenchman had been taken to task in Germany, could be traced back to none other than Hugo Wolf. Rolland on occasion used letters by Wolf almost word for word, allowing his opinions to flow once again from the pages of *Jean-Christophe*. Both Hugo Wolf and Jean-Christophe, for example, suffered at the hands of an irate Brahms admirer with Rolland translating directly comments recorded in Wolf's correspondence to a friend about the treatment handed out to him by the conductor at rehearsal of *Penthesilea*. Similarly, both Hugo Wolf and Jean-Christophe joined and then resigned from a Wagner association, with Rolland once again relying almost word for word upon Wolf's letter of resignation for Jean-Christophe's own withdrawal. It is interesting that K  chler made no suggestion of disapproval in Rolland's plagiarist use of historical sources. For him, it merely demonstrated that these sometimes very unflattering opinions about German music were not the prejudices of an unsympathetic Frenchman, but the conclusions of one of Germany's own great composers:

Die Tatsache der Entlehnung selbst zeigt zur Gen  ge, da   R. Rolland nicht aus hochm  utigem Herabschauen und banausenhafter Unkenntnis sein Stimmungs- und Charakterbild der deutschen Musikkultur entwirft, sondern da   er Wirklichkeit wiedergibt, indem er nur Hugo Wolfs Erfahrung und leidenschaftlichen Protest in Wien auf die Verh  ltnisse seines Werkes   bertr  gt.⁸

Most of the Weimar scholars, whilst acknowledging some of the inaccuracies in the portrait of Germany, did not seek to deny Rolland the right to choose a German as the hero of his epic novel. Indeed, they still greeted his choice for the most part with considerable satisfaction. Walther Küchler called the creation of Jean-Christophe a "literarische Ruhmestat,"⁹ unparalleled in European literature. In spite of Rolland's sometimes harsh words for Germany, Küchler echoed the general consensus that Rolland had been motivated by a profound understanding and respect for Germany:

Wer eine solche Schöpfung hervorbringen konnte, der mußte doch wohl dem deutschen Wesen nicht ganz so gleichgültig gegenüberstehen, der muß mit einer gewissen Liebeskraft, die selbst im Tadel und in der Zurechtweisung sich verrät, in unsere Art hineingeleuchtet haben.¹⁰

A majority of German critics equally continued to greet Rolland's ideal German characters with a good deal of satisfaction. These characters, whom Rolland had earlier been suspected of treating with a degree of derision, notably Professor Peter Schulz and the young blind girl Modesta, were lauded as essentially positive personifications of German Idealism. Again Küchler traced Rolland's sources for the creation of the Peter Schulz character back to Hugo Wolf, showing that the French author had probably been inspired by accounts of a real-life friend of Wolf's, a certain Tübingen professor, Dr Emil Kaufmann. Küchler noted the irony with which Rolland treated Professor Schulz and his milieu, perhaps unnecessarily lending to the episode a *petit bourgeois*, almost philistine quality which it had not possessed in real life. In spite of this, Rolland's sympathy and understanding for the basic nobility of the character unmistakably shone through:

Und so hat denn auch der Dichter des *Jean-Christophe* das Rührende, Schlichte, Herzliche und Kunstbegeisterte der Menschen dieses Winkels mit einem Anflug von Ironie in das Gemütlich-Philisterhafte stilisiert, er hat den edlen Rheinweinduft mit Biergeruch und Tabaksqualm durchsetzt, ohne daß er jedoch seine Bewunderung und seine Sympathie für diese schöne Stätte edlen deutschen Menschentums irgendwie abzuschwächen gedächte.¹¹

It was, however, Jean-Christophe himself who represented for German critics the most perfect embodiment of German Idealism. Whilst we shall have cause to examine the treatment of Christophe's character in greater depth later in this chapter, let us note for the present the degree of satisfaction with which Kückler for one greeted this portrait of a great German. He welcomed Jean-Christophe as the "lebenspendende Energie- und Tatmensch."¹² In spite of all inaccuracies and exaggerations, *Jean-Christophe* represented an exaltation of German vitalism:

Daß R. Rolland diese deutsche Lebenskraft in ihrer edelsten und weltwirkendsten Form geahnt, mehr, daß er sie irgendwie erlebt hat, muß sein Werk wertvoll für uns machen. Mögen sich auch hier und da Übertreibungen und Entstellungen in der Schilderung deutscher Verhältnisse finden, so macht doch die große und hinreißende Vorstellung, die er von dem Edelsten im deutschen Wesen hat, einzelne Entgleisungen und Versäumnisse glänzend wett.¹³

Jean-Christophe had been written in the spirit of love, pain and hope. More than could be said, he contended, of Germany's own Heinrich Mann, whose pre-war polemical novel *Der Untertan* was marred by gross caricature and a mood of "lichtlose Lieblosigkeit."¹⁴

Hans Leo Götzfried, in *Romain Rolland: Das Weltbild im Spiegel seiner Werke* (1931), while acknowledging the strong autobiographical influence, still felt entitled to consider Jean-Christophe a German. For him, Christophe's nationality was not a "Nebenumstand" as Lerch had described it. Jean-Christophe's personal qualities were those of a true German hero, a representative of German Idealism:

Welches aber ist der echte und unverfälschte Idealismus, wie Rolland ihn erreicht wissen möchte? Es ist zunächst der Idealismus, den der Dichter Christophe mit auf den Weg gibt und den wir auch als den wahren und kraftvollen deutschen Idealismus ansehen dürfen, da ja der Held ein echter Deutscher ist und als solcher unsere Nation repräsentiert. Christophe ist im Besitze wertvoller Tugenden wie

Sittenreinheit, Treue, Aufrichtigkeit, Heiterkeit, Mut und
Freiheitsliebe.¹⁵

It is interesting to note that Götzfried was unable to shake himself totally free of this sense of national pride at such a positive portrayal of a German.

Eugen Lerch lauded Rolland's unshakeable belief in the ideals of brotherhood and love and his creation of a character in Jean-Christophe who was willing to pursue these goals fearlessly, never shying from self-sacrifice. True idealism did not ignore the evil, darker sides of life, wrote Lerch, but entered into a resolute struggle with them. For Lerch, Rolland and his fictitious hero represented artists, inspired by a love of God, fighting in defence of spiritual ideals in a materialistic age:

Das eigentliche Thema des Romans ist aber garnicht die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland. Sein eigentliches Thema ist vielmehr der Kampf der neuen Generation gegen die alte, im besonderen der Kampf eines Gotterfüllten gegen eine gottlose, gottverlassene Zeit.¹⁶

One of the false idols that Rolland attacked so vehemently in *Jean-Christophe* was the so-called false Idealism or sentimentality which he depicted in *La Révolte* as prevalent in Germany. Idealism and sentimentality occupy different territories, however, Lerch assured his readers. Sentimentality was a game with feelings, a self-deluding belief that one had to ignore the evil aspects of the world in order to continue believing in it. The question of whether Rolland had attacked German Idealism *an sich* was hence robustly rebutted, most of these Weimar academics believing like Lerch that its most prominent representatives, Goethe and Schiller, Beethoven, Kant and Fichte commanded Rolland's complete admiration:

In Wahrheit liegt ihm nichts ferner als der Gedanke, sich gegen den echten deutschen Idealismus zu wenden, den Idealismus eines Goethe und Schiller, eines Beethoven, eines Kant oder Fichte. Im Gegenteil: er selbst ist (wir suchten es zu zeigen) der wahre Thronerbe dieses

Idealismus unseres klassischen Zeitalters, und an diesem echten Idealismus mißt er den falschen: die deutsche Sentimentalität.¹⁷

In any event, Rolland was simply seen to echo Goethe in condemning the German tendency to sentimentalise the ideal: "Bei den Deutschen [wird] das Ideelle gleich sentimental."¹⁸ He was hence in the best German company in condemning this trait.

Rolland, we remember, had on occasion seriously irritated sensibilities by suggesting that intellectual and cultural life in Germany had entered a moral and aesthetic cul-de-sac after the victory of Sedan. Far from denying this, the Weimar scholars echoed Rolland's own conclusions: "Diese Epoche aber war die Zeit des tiefsten Tiefstandes der deutschen Kultur," wrote Lerch.¹⁹ Walther Kückler also supported Rolland in his contention that Germany post-1870 was no match for the German classical age:

[...] wenn die Ausländer immer wieder über den Untergang des alten geistigen Deutschland klagten, so lag der Grund nicht nur in Furcht und Übelwollen, sondern auch in dem ganz richtigen Gefühl, daß das Deutschland der Goethe, Schiller, Kant, Beethoven, der Romantiker tatsächlich wertvoller für uns selbst und für die Welt war, als das Deutschland nach 1870.²⁰

German criticism had thus progressed through a number of stages in assimilating Rolland's portrait of Germany: from the widespread pre-war tendency simply to ignore all those elements of *Jean-Christophe* which they found uncomfortable through to the later wartime trend towards highlighting the content of unflattering passages. Now many of these Rolland scholars of the Weimar Republic confronted, and to a considerable degree affirmed, the controversial conclusions of *Jean-Christophe* about German culture post-1870. They readily accepted Rolland's contention that the age of German Classicism was a fundamentally more valuable era than the years between 1870 and 1914. These opinions did not represent the prejudices of an unsympathetic foreigner, they agreed, but underscored the conclusions of Germany's own intellectual elite.

This recognition was accompanied by the tendency among the critics to take an international, rather than a national perspective upon intellectual developments. Hans-Leo Götzfried was at pains to point out that sentimentality, hypocrisy, egocentricity and the lust for power knew no national or class boundaries:

Der wahre Feind steht also nicht jenseits der Grenzen, er findet sich in jedem Lande sowohl bei den Herrschern als beim Volke und heißt: Eigennutz, Stolz, Machtbegierde oder Heuchelei.²¹

The main thrust of the critical discourse then moved away from the debate on how accurate or inaccurate Rolland had been in his portrayal of Germany. The debate that followed broadened. The Romanist scholars turned their attention to tracing the literary and philosophical influences of *Jean-Christophe*, and evaluating Rolland's position within French literature.

In 1918, a critical work was published which did much to change Germany's perspective on literary France. Completed just eleven days after the Armistice and compiled from a series of lectures delivered at the University of Bonn, its main task was to record developments in the cultural and moral atmosphere of pre-war France and chart their influence on literary production. Ernst Robert Curtius and his study *Die literarischen Wegbereiter des neuen Frankreich*, were to become extremely influential in the field of Romanist studies in general and Rolland studies in particular. Curtius was one of the first German critics to attempt to understand the significance of *Jean-Christophe* in a European context.

Curtius acknowledged the consternation that *Jean-Christophe* had provoked in Germany upon its publication. At that time, he commented, most German intellectuals identified two dominant themes in French literature, those of decadence and *esprit*: "Die Vorstellungen der geistigen Deutschen von Frankreich lassen sich unter zwei Hauptgesichtspunkte bringen. Sie kristallisieren sich um die Begriffe Dekadenz und Esprit."²² The decadent tradition had its roots in Baudelaire and Verlaine, whilst French *esprit* was

most readily identified with Ernest Renan, Anatole France and Henri de Régnier. Through both these traditions, however, Germans had come to appreciate and expect in French literature perfection of form, beauty, elegance, clarity as well as exoticism and eroticism: "Man verlangte," wrote Curtius, "'seltene Kunst und Literatur' und importierte sie, da sie in Deutschland trotz löblichem Bemühen nicht gut genug herzustellen war, aus Frankreich."²³ In Curtius' opinion these views were dangerously one-sided since they meant that Germans often actively sought entertainment, indeed titillation in French literature which could ultimately only lead to a diminution of its worth. He believed that a more profound understanding of France and her literature and culture would only come when Germany began to understand how an author like Rolland related to the tradition of his own country.

Die literarischen Wegbereiter des neuen Frankreich described the dominant mood of pessimism in post-Sedan France and traced its influence on the literary scene. Indeed, Curtius argued, it was only against this background that Romain Rolland's impact might be understood. France appeared to be at sea intellectually, left with no moral foundation to anchor herself against the forces of scepticism, materialism and decadence:

Die Überzeugung, daß das nationale Leben innerlich erkrankt sei, verbreitete sich in Frankreich. Sie schien eine furchtbare Bestätigung zu erfahren, als die Niederlagen von 1870, der Sturz des Kaiserreiches und der blutige Bürgerkrieg der Kommune das Land an den Rand des Untergangs brachten. In den Jahrzehnten nach dem Kriege beschäftigte das Problem des Verfalls die Geister.²⁴

Curtius commented on how Ernest Renan's famous prognosis was widely cited to illustrate the dominant mood of the age: "La France se meurt, ne troublez pas son agonie."²⁵ He recorded how decadence and decay had become the watchwords of the generation of 1885, its sole refuge: the ivory tower of art. *L'art pour l'art* aestheticism and dilettantism were seen by many in and outside France as direct products of the nation's sickness.²⁶

Curtius and a number of other Rolland critics reminded their readers that it was Friedrich Nietzsche who had been one of the first to recognise the debilitating effects of scepticism as a philosophical attitude. Robert Dvorak in his 1933 thesis *Das Ethische und Ästhetische bei Romain Rolland* recorded how Nietzsche had lambasted so-called objectivity, relativism, and *l'art pour l'art* literature as the symptoms of a European disease in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. Yet, Nietzsche believed, if every European nation was touched by this disease France was sickest of all. Ernest Renan was in Nietzsche's view a disaster for France: "Dieser Geist Renans, ein Geist der entnervt, ist ein Verhängnis mehr für das arme, kranke, willenskranke Frankreich."²⁷ Worse still for European culture, French sceptics and dilettantes managed to give to their work a beauty of form which threatened to seduce the rest of Europe. France sold this pathological disease under a cloak of such sophistication and culture that none could resist contagion:

Willenslähmung: wo findet man nicht heute diesen Krüppel sitzen! Und oft noch wie aufgeputzt. Wie verführerisch herausgeputzt! Es gibt die schönsten Prunk- und Lügenkleider für diese Krankheit; und daß z.B. das Meiste von dem, was sich heute als "Objektivität", "Wissenschaftlichkeit", *l'art pour l'art*, "reines willensfreies Erkennen", in die Schauläden stellt, nur aufgeputzte Skepsis und Willenslähmung ist, für diese Diagnose der europäischen Krankheit will ich eintreten. - Im jetzigen Frankreich ist demnach [...] der Wille am schlimmsten erkrankt.²⁸

According to this reading, *l'art pour l'art* literature was born out of the nihilism of the epoch. With the death of morality, of absolute values, came the elevation of beauty as one of the sole tangible and meaningful human experiences, beauty of form the poet's only achievable goal. Curtius wished his reader to understand that this was the intellectual backdrop of Rolland's formative years. It was Rolland's fundamental opposition to this concept of both art and life, he argued, that was to inspire his struggle against contemporary Paris, expressed so clearly and forcefully in *Jean-Christophe*.

Naturalism, an opponent of *l'art pour l'art*, might have been a refuge for Rolland. Eugen Lerch stressed, however, that Rolland did not join forces with the Naturalists, with whom he shared an enmity for the ivory tower of the aesthetes. For Rolland, maintained Lerch, a common thread linked both camps: they were both victims of the same neurasthenic pessimism. The Naturalists regarded man as the hapless victim of the blind forces of natural law and social causality. Any claim to a creative will, to the notion of freedom of choice between good and evil was denied. Freedom itself was considered illusory, for man was inextricably bound by the constraints of the age into which he was born, his environment and his genetic predisposition:

Was war der Mensch? Ein Nichts, ein Spielball blinder Kräfte, ein Tier, dem ein Zufall der Selektion das Bewußtsein verliehen hatte, das Bewußtsein, das ihm den lächerlichen Irrwahn eingab, er könne irgendetwas ausrichten gegen die namenlosen Mächte, die ihn und das Weltall regieren. Mit Unrecht glaubte er die Wahl zu haben zwischen Gut und Böse, die Verantwortung für seine Handlungen, die Freiheit seines Willens.²⁹

Lerch identified Emile Zola as the exponent of Naturalism proper, of literature as an extension of science. Under his auspices, literature attempted to limit itself to the observation and reproduction of reality. The artist himself was seen as little more than a product of his time, milieu and race. The novel as a scientific experiment was born. Zola's genius of observation, averred Lerch, was given in service to a demonstration of the tyranny of human instinct and the absurdity of attempting to combat one's physiological needs and hereditary constitution. Lerch perhaps failed to see that it was Zola's inability to remain within the constraints of his own ideology that guaranteed him a place among the literary greats.

It was in this *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere that the pursuit of pleasure became paramount: love was portrayed as lustful egocentricity and faith in an ideal as proof of intellectual debility. To have a sense of duty and responsibility, to hold moral values, became attitudes considered desperately old-fashioned, tasteless, even barbaric:

Die Liebe war als eine Illusion entlarvt, als eine heuchlerische Maskerade der Zuchtwahl, der Glaube war ein Zeichen von Rückständigkeit, die Tugend ein Produkt wie der Zucker, die Kunst eine Magd der Naturwissenschaft oder ein Genußmittel für Feinschmecker.³⁰

This was the intellectual atmosphere of Rolland's Paris and it was against this dominant air of pessimism that Rolland set his great monument, *Jean-Christophe*:

Auch der *Johann-Christoph* ist eine Dichtung vom Glauben. Vom Glauben an den eigenen Genius, vom Glauben, der sich nicht beirren läßt, der ausharrt und gekrönt wird. [...] Einen Roman, in dem von Gott die Rede ist, einen Roman, der zur Einkehr und Umkehr aufruft, einen Roman, der, wenn er einschlägt, ein halbes Lager an sonstigen Romanen in Makulatur verwandelt! Unbegreiflich, daß dieser Roman überhaupt gedruckt wurde.³¹

Opposition to dominant contemporary trends, that was the watchword for the Weimar scholars. Robert Dvorak, in his doctoral thesis, found Rolland's concept of the artist was born out of direct opposition to the tremendously influential Gustave Flaubert. Flaubert's essential feature, he contended, was the manner in which he rejected life, always measuring how much reality fell short of one's dreams: "Sein ganzes Werk ist ein Pamphlet gegen das Leben und die Menschheit, eine leidenschaftliche Klage über ihre grausame Sinnlosigkeit und Gemeinheit."³² It was out of this profound hatred of life that Flaubert sought to create a haven in art, an eternal sanctuary for beauty: "Auf dem sinnlosen Trümmerfelde des Lebens suchte er durch das formvollendete Kunstwerk Schönheit und Dauer zu errichten."³³ Dvorak also related how Rolland's rejection of Flaubert was influenced by a more general disquiet amongst French critics with the realist novel.

Two highly influential French critiques of the late Nineteenth Century were highlighted by Dvorak in his case against Flaubert: Ferdinand Brunetière's *Le roman naturaliste* (1882) and E M de Vogüé's *Le roman russe* (1886).

They pointed to the religious and ethical strengths of the English and Russian realist novelists in comparison to the coldness, cynicism and lack of humanity of their French counterparts. They attacked the cynicism and destructive power of the literature of Flaubert and his disciples:

Flaubert et ses disciples ont fait le vide dans l'âme de leurs lecteurs; dans cette âme dévastée il n' y a plus qu' un sentiment, produit fatal du nihilisme: le pessimisme.³⁴

Salvation for the French soul seemed to lie in the elevation of all forms of thought which cultivated and strengthened the will to action, both of the individual and the French nation as a whole. It thus became the role of the artist to promote the courage and the strength of the individual against the pessimism of the age. Unlike Lorenz Krapp, whom we saw in Chapter One of the present study insist upon the decadence of French literature and society, however, these later critics, acknowledged that this pessimism was a truly international phenomenon and infected the atmosphere in Germany just as much as it did in France. Knowledge and experience were not to be reined in by national boundaries, they crossed border posts as freely as the air we breathe. Pessimism was involuntarily inhaled at every breath throughout Europe. Germany too was inhaling the putrid air of Schopenhauer, whilst Naturalism dominated in the field of German literature, with its depressing insistence on social misery.

Indeed, our critics argued, it was to Paris that the German *Bürger* looked. He was not, however, in search of a new idealism, he was looking for entertainment. The German reader welcomed the atmosphere of decadence with which Baudelaire and Verlaine had imbued their work. German readers, maintained Curtius, consciously sought to suppress any sense of affinity between France and Germany. They wanted to forget the familiar beer bench atmosphere of home in order to embrace the magic of Latin culture. For Curtius it was clear that Germany had a woefully inadequate understanding of the history of French writing and had consciously chosen to focus upon those elements of the culture which fed the exotic myth. It was,

he pointed out, not uncommon to find French pornographic literature reprinted in expensive German editions:

Und was in Paris an Stelle der Verlagsfirma die Aufschrift trug "se vend sous le manteau", erschien in kostbaren deutschen Ausgaben. Bibliophilie, Erotik und Ästhetentum waren kaum unterscheidbare Begriffe geworden und wurden in dieser Mischung als Stimulantia genossen. Das französische Aroma dabei war unersetzlich.³⁵

It would appear that a French aura dispelled, among many Germans, any true sense of critical judgement.

It was hardly surprising then, wrote Curtius, that Germans felt such shock waves upon the discovery of *Jean-Christophe*. Yet his point is this: it was an error to dismiss Rolland as un-French simply because he did not fit with German preconceptions of what constituted French literature:

Keiner der modernen Franzosen paßt so wenig in das Bild, das wir uns von Frankreich zu machen pflegen, wie Romain Rolland. Aber anstatt mit kühnem Entschluß zu behaupten, er sei eben nicht französisch, sollten wir lieber jenes Bild aufgeben, da es offenbar verkehrt ist.³⁶

Curtius saw it as his responsibility to attempt to re-introduce a discerning and objective understanding of French literature and to extend the all too narrow definitions. He initiated an important trend in post-1918 criticism by placing Rolland firmly within French literary tradition, rejecting the tendency of his predecessors to tear him from his roots. Rolland's opposition to the literature of eroticism and aestheticism, his open declaration of faith in an ideal, his exploration of the nature and meaning of friendship could not, declared Curtius, be taken as proof of alien status.

Eugen Lerch later echoed Curtius in this belief, arguing that those philosophers and writers thought to be most representative of French culture in fact represented only one school of thought. Rolland belonged to an older, no less important French tradition:

In Frankreich gibt es neben den Rationalisten und Skeptikern, neben den Montaigne, Molière, Voltaire, Renan, Anatole France, die bei uns allein das Bild der Nachbarnation bestimmen, eine andere Familie, die eher älter ist als diese: den h. Bernard von Clairvaux, François de Sales, Calvin, Pascal und die Jansenisten, Fénelon, Rousseau, Lamennais, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Paul Claudel. Und wenn Romain Rolland einer Familie angehört, so ist es diese.³⁷

Rolland's work, as he himself had wished, was deemed to constitute a significant contribution towards a reassessment of French literature in Germany, ensuring that a broadening of previous parameters was undertaken. For these later German critics, *Jean-Christophe* itself constituted the most adequate discussion of the nature and concerns of France, past and present. France as the land of Pascal, of the Crusades and the Commune, Gothic art and the Great Revolution. Indeed, argued Curtius, it was through Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, that the German people might best understand their neighbours:

Alles, was Rolland über das wahre Frankreich, über das Volk, die Bildungswelt, die Schicksale und den Charakter Frankreichs sagt, kommt aus solcher Tiefe der Anschauung, aus solchem Umfang des Wissens, aus solcher Weite des Geistes, daß es nach Eindringlichkeit, Allseitigkeit und Gesinnung das bedeutendste Bild Frankreichs in der gegenwärtigen Literatur ist.³⁸

Rolland's image of France in *Jean-Christophe* was so convincing, so well informed, so full of personal conviction that it represented the most important contemporary portrait of France. This novel, Curtius predicted, would be a major source of reference in the future for any serious student of France:

Es ist darüber hinaus eines der wichtigsten Selbstzeugnisse des französischen Geistes überhaupt und wird als solches immer wieder befragt werden müssen von allen, die sich ernsthaft mit Frankreich beschäftigen wollen. Es ist ein Brennpunkt von Romain Rollands Lebenswerk.³⁹

Germany had failed to acknowledge Rolland as an absolutely exemplary member of the new French intelligentsia precisely because it had failed to recognise the sea change taking place in turn-of-the-century France. The *Renouveau français* had transformed the intellectual life of the nation and Rolland was, in Curtius' view, both one of its great instigators and one of its most incisive recorders. In an important article which captured the spirit of the new age so well, Rolland had related the vitalism, the new-found passion and conviction of France's contemporary writers. In his "Chronique parisienne" of November 1912 in the *Bibliothèque universelle et Revue suisse*, Rolland highlighted this very quality, vitalism, as the most important characteristic of the new age. It was, he said, as if the younger generation had signed a new pact with life. Rolland paid tribute in this article to the influence of Henri Bergson. It was he who had returned to the individual a sense of shaping his own existence. Bergson, and with him the younger generation of turn-of-the-century France declared the only relevant philosophy to be that which gave expression to individuality.

The service that Curtius provided to his readers and fellow scholars in those early post-war days was a demonstration that France was not simply the land of decadent, sceptical art, but that it was also home to individuals who broke this mould in the most fundamental fashion. They represented optimism, not pessimism, not scepticism but faith, neither immorality nor amorality, but a fierce desire to achieve physical and moral purity. It was in Rolland that Curtius recognised France's most poignant new representative:

Die Kraft des Glaubens - dies lebt in Romain Rolland [...]. Er ist für sie [die Jugend] ein Träger des Glaubens gewesen, des Glaubens an die Menschlichkeit, an das heroische Leben, an den Sieg der Idee. Das gibt seinem Werk und seiner Gestalt ihre geschichtliche Bedeutung für das Werden des neuen Frankreich.⁴⁰

It was thus only long after the event, that German criticism began to recognise the tremendous impact of the Dreyfus Affair upon the political and intellectual life of the nation. Out of the long drawn-out conflict between the exigencies of the state and the rights of the individual, a new national ideal

had been born. The France which had seemed locked in its death throes was re-born out of the ashes. A desire to cleanse public life of its lies and its cynicism became prominent. Most importantly the *renouveau* gave birth to a reawakening of the spiritual life of the individual, however that might be expressed, whether in the regeneration of nationalist feelings or the stirrings of new-found religious fervour.

In his "Chronique parisienne" Rolland had set out to prove the existence of a new France. His own *Jean-Christophe*, said E R Curtius, stood as a monument to this transformation. Lerch also believed that Rolland's contribution to the sea change in France's self-image was very substantial indeed. Whilst recognising the stamp that Henri Bergson had put upon the intellectual atmosphere of France in 1907 with his *chef d' oeuvre, L'évolution créatrice*, he maintained that Romain Rolland had gone one vital step further than Bergson. For Bergson, *l'élan vital* was an entirely amoral force, as much at the service of the sick and criminal mind as at the services of the saint. He had freed man from the chains of determinism and led him back to a belief in himself only to abandon his soul to the relativity of all values:

Bergson hat den Menschen frei gemacht, frei von den Fesseln des Determinismus - zugleich aber auch frei von den Fesseln des Sittengesetzes. Seine Philosophie hat die Einseitigkeit des Rationalismus überwunden - doch nur, um ihn durch einen ebenso einseitigen Irrationalismus zu ersetzen. Er hat den Teufel durch Beelzebub ausgetrieben.⁴¹

Lerch believed that Rolland had gone one vital step further than Bergson in seeking to return to man not only his autonomy but his sense of moral responsibility. These Rolland scholars greatly admired the way in which he sought to combine the concepts of freedom and responsibility in *Jean-Christophe*. For Christophe, striving for moral good was inseparable from the notion of life itself. In this, said Robert Dvorak, Rolland had become the true leader of the younger generation: "Durch diese Verbindung von Lebenskult und ethischem Idealismus wurde Rolland recht eigentlich zum Führer der jungen Generation."⁴²

One can clearly see here that German criticism was catching up with events in France, recognising that pre-war France was a very different country from the decadent, cynical, soulless society that the German *Bürger* had been accustomed to look down upon through his half-moon spectacles.

Furthermore, Rolland's depiction of the regeneration of France out of the ashes of a bitter defeat was also felt to provide an inspirational message for German youth. The Weimar critics felt they recognised important parallels between post-Sedan France and post-Versailles Germany. Out of Rolland's novel, they suggested, the young people of Germany, just as the young people of France before them, might find the courage and determination, the moral and spiritual strength to make their nation strong once again. Curtius dedicated his work to the youth of Germany: "Der neuen Jugend unseres Volkes möchte es sich darbieten. Sie wird die geistige Wiedergeburt Deutschlands mitheraufführen, an die wir glühend glauben."⁴³ Neither Curtius, nor most of these Weimar scholars, wished to see a regeneration of Germany in a National Socialist sense. Their ambition led them in the same direction as that indicated by Rolland in *Jean-Christophe*, towards a common European homeland. Curtius commented later:

Aber ohne den idealistischen Glauben, der mich wie viele andere meiner Generation beseelte, wäre das Buch nicht geschrieben worden: den Glauben an die Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit eines neuen Europa. Entstehen konnte es nur durch eine schöpferische Neugestaltung des deutsch-französischen Verhältnisses. Eine politische Forderung war es also, die zwischen den Zeilen der *Wegbereiter* stand. Der Europagedanke mußte geistig unterbaut werden. Dazu wollte mein Buch helfen.⁴⁴

Rolland's writings were seen to engage both the critic and the reader on a political (though not party political) and even more importantly, on a moral and spiritual plane. *Jean-Christophe* represented a challenge to the individual to pledge his cause with the forces of progress and enlightenment in Europe.

The role of the artist as sage, visionary and as priest was indeed one which was much debated by Weimar Rolland critics. It was in Rolland's understanding of the role of the artist that the Weimar critics began to recognise the very substantial influence of the Russian authors, in particular that of Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy. Hans-Leo Götzfried recounted the impact of Tolstoy's thinking on French intellectuals at the end of the Nineteenth Century and his personal struggle against the hypocrisy and lies of European culture had made him a hero in France: "Dieser Mann wurde in Frankreich der geistige Führer der idealistischen Reaktion. Wir können seine Wirkung nicht hoch genug einschätzen."⁴⁵ Götzfried attributed special status to Tolstoy in Rolland's own intellectual development, recounting how the young Frenchman had written to the Russian Count as a twenty-two year old student at the *Ecole Normale*. In a pamphlet discussing the nature of art, Tolstoy had called music a whore, spoken of Shakespeare as a fourth-rate writer and described Beethoven as a seducer of the senses. Rolland had desperately needed to understand how Tolstoy could have spoken about some of his most revered idols with such dismissive contempt. Against all expectation, Tolstoy replied to Rolland's letter. The thirty-eight page exposé argued that the true artist must embody an overwhelming love for humanity, not for art, and that the only meaningful purpose behind artistic creation lay in the struggle to unite humanity in that love: "Tout ce qui réunit les hommes est le bien et le beau, - tout ce qui les sépare est le mal et le laid. Tout le monde connaît cette formule. Elle est écrite dans notre coeur."⁴⁶ These, argued Götzfried, were the very thoughts at the heart of Rolland's own creative writing, indeed his life:

Die Worte Tolstois sind von entscheidender Bedeutung für die Kunstauffassung Rollands geworden. Fortan sieht er die höchste Aufgabe der Kunst darin, der Allgemeinheit zu dienen, und nur *den* Künstler hält er für wahrhaft berufen, der von opferbereiter Liebe zur Menschheit erfüllt ist. Rollands ganzes Werk ist aus diesem Gedanken heraus geschrieben. Höchstes Ziel seiner Kunst ist das, was die Menschen eint. Er verkündet ihnen das Evangelium der Liebe.⁴⁷

Art must unite humanity through love. There was the underlying principle upon which Rolland's work and life was based.

Eugen Lerch similarly underlined the influence of the writer of *Jasnyaya Polyana*. In Tolstoy, Rolland found the same disgust for scepticism and aestheticism that had so turned him against the spirit of his age, the same need to embrace faith. Lerch laid part of the blame for the sad state of affairs in turn-of-the-century France at the feet of women. For, he maintained, they had established a quite abnormal cultural dominance: "Im damaligen Frankreich aber, in der Gesellschaft wie in der Kunst, herrschte die Frau." It was woman who sought amusement in art, woman who demanded the dominance of love on the stage as in the novel, woman who ultimately strangled the serious, ethical demands of art: "Es war eine Zeit ohne Glauben, ohne Kraft, ohne Frische, ohne Jugend, eine Zeit ohne Größe, eine weichliche und weibische Zeit."⁴⁸ Woman the corruptor of male idealism is a theme which has come down through the ages. Its implications are too broad to be explored here. Let us simply note the association of the feminine with weakness, frivolity and corruption. It was thus no coincidence, stated Lerch, that Rolland's heroes and his artistic creations were men: he looked to great German men of the past, mainly the composers, and to Russian men of his own time for inspiration. Rolland's literary production was described by this critic as chaste, pure, manly: "Kein Dichter unserer Tage ist so keusch, so rein, so männlich wie er."⁴⁹

In the Russians, argued Lerch, Rolland found men who possessed the 'masculine' virtues he so admired: strength, willpower, endurance, purity, and faith in an ideal. Tolstoy, Gogol and Dostoevsky had all expressed their doubts in the intrinsic value of art and had sought to lend their writings more of an ethical than an aesthetic character. They demanded that the artist should recognise his role as educator, as moral teacher of his people:

Bei den Russen ist die religiöse Tradition so stark, daß sie die Autonomie der Kunst, die Theorie des *l'art pour l'art*, die auch Rolland bekämpft, nicht anerkennen. [...] Sie wollen [...] mehr, Höheres: Erzieher ihres Volkes, Prediger, Seher, Propheten.⁵⁰

Rolland shared the desire to be more than an artist, to be a moral teacher: "Romain Rolland [ist] nicht nur 'Dichter', sondern auch 'Prediger'." ⁵¹ It was for this reason, Lerch believed, that upon superficial analysis, Rolland appeared to be more Russian or German than French. In the popular imagination at least, French culture was seen to elevate aesthetic over ethical concerns, whilst German and Slavic art gave primacy to moral considerations.

It was here, however, that Rolland and Tolstoy, whilst both sworn enemies of aestheticism, were also seen to part company. The Rolland scholars applauded the fact that the French writer refused to make his art wholly subservient to any moral, social or political ideology. He had demanded total freedom for the artist in *Jean-Christophe* to create according to the dictates of his own inspiration. Art had its own imperative, which obeyed no moral programme, its own intrinsic worth. Rolland recognised, believed Lerch, that art was not a social construct but an emanation from God:

Er muß erfüllt sein von seinem Gott - und wenn er von seinem Gott erfüllt ist, so wird er auch andere mit seinem Gott erfüllen können, so wird er, *ohne es zu wollen*, dieser Aufgabe eines Trösters und Helfers der Menschheit genügen. Die Kunst gehört nicht einer praktischen, sondern einer übernatürlichen Ordnung an. Sie ist göttlichen Wesens. ⁵²

It is to this conclusion that Rolland led his fictional creation in *Le Buisson ardent*, Christophe rejecting all utilitarianism and didacticism in art:

L'art le plus haut, le seul digne de ce nom, est au-dessus des lois d'un jour: il est une comète lancée dans l'infini. Que cette force soit utile, ou qu'elle semble inutile, même dangereuse, dans l'ordre pratique, elle est la force, elle est le feu; elle est l'éclair jailli du ciel: par là, elle est sacrée, par là, elle est bienfaisante. Ses bienfaits peuvent être, par fortune, même de l'ordre pratique; mais ses vrais, ses divins bienfaits sont, comme la foi, de l'ordre surnaturel. Elle est pareille au soleil,

dont elle est issue. Le soleil n'est ni moral, ni immoral. Il est Celui qui Est. Il vainc la nuit. Ainsi, l'art...⁵³

The Weimar scholars believed that Rolland had indeed succeeded in *Jean-Christophe* in asserting the artist over the preacher and had mastered the desire to give to his writing a social didacticism which would have destroyed its eternal appeal. While acknowledging that the roles of artist and preacher were sometimes uncomfortably close in *Jean-Christophe*, Rolland had, Curtius argued, reached a profound understanding of the relationship between art and utilitarianism:

Die große Gefahr dieser Kunstauffassung liegt darin, daß sie dazu verleiten kann, die Kunst außerkünstlerischen Zwecken, etwa sittlichen oder sozialen Idealen, dienstbar zu machen. Vielleicht hat sich Rolland von dieser Gefahr nicht immer ferngehalten. Aber wie Christophe hat er zu einer tieferen Auffassung von den Beziehungen zwischen der Kunst und der Wohlfahrt der Menschheit den Weg gefunden.⁵⁴

It is interesting to note here the uncommon assertion of Rolland, the artist, over Rolland the moralist. It was a rare insight into Rolland's ambitions as a writer. The conviction of these Weimar scholars that he was interesting first and foremost as an artist, challenged the common critical consensus of Rolland, as a preacher of brotherly love. Even the enormously influential Stefan Zweig perpetuated rather than challenged this view.⁵⁵ This is an important point which will be discussed in greater depth in the next chapter.

The Weimar scholars were, however, enormously attracted to Romain Rolland for what they saw as his rejection of political solutions to human problems. Jean-Christophe, said Curtius, turned away from the burgeoning workers' movement, to go in search of a moral and intellectual elite. His search was an individual one, which demanded that man should be judged according to his own worth and not by reference to class distinctions, race or nation. Social and political change could never eliminate the necessity for

each individual to interpret and evaluate his own ethical and metaphysical position in relation to the world, wrote Curtius:

Daß die Gleichung zwischen Geist und Welt von jedem Individuum neu für sich aufgestellt werden muß, daß der Einzelne die ethische und metaphysische Deutung der Welt aus eigenen Kräften und mit eigenen Mitteln vollziehen muß, - das ist der Satz, der für Rolland diejenige unmittelbare Evidenz und Unableitbarkeit besitzt, die den Axiomen des Denkens zukommt.⁵⁶

Rolland, argued his Weimar critics, placed complete personal freedom and responsibility at the very summit of human achievement. The need for the individual to create his own self, often against the norms of the society and time in which he lived: "Sein Ziel ist die vollkommen autonome Einzelpersönlichkeit."⁵⁷

Curtius saw this demand for absolute freedom as one of the most important reasons for Rolland's closeness to Germany. The Protestant ethic required the individual to create his relationship with God in total freedom. Rolland's liberalism, his individualism, asserted Curtius, was to be found in this Protestant culture of deeply individual introspection:

Wenn man für Rollands Weltanschauung den geistesgeschichtlichen Ort bestimmen wollte, wäre er in der Sphäre der protestantisch-musikalisch verinnerlichten Persönlichkeitskultur zu suchen. Das ist wohl der tiefste Grund für das Gefühl geistiger Verwandtschaft, das Rolland für Deutschland empfunden hat.⁵⁸

Eugen Lerch meanwhile traced Rolland's demand for total personal freedom back to the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's impact on Rolland and Henri Bergson, indeed on late Nineteenth Century French thought, wrote Lerch, was immeasurable. The need to recreate God within one's own breast, the need to conquer not others, but one's own demons, the will to power over oneself; these were the stated ambitions of Rolland and Nietzsche alike. For Lerch, Rolland was not merely a true disciple but one who consummated the German philosopher's teaching:

Härte, Strenge, Grausamkeit übt auch er - aber nicht gegen andere, sondern gegen sich selbst. Nicht über andere will er herrschen, sondern über sich selbst. *Sein* "Wille zur Macht": - der Wille zur Macht über sich selbst, über das Gemeine in ihm. Durch stete Selbstüberwindung, das ist durch *Leiden*, wird er, der er sein soll. - Zarathustra rief seinen Jüngern zu: "Gehet hin und folget mir nicht nach!" Romain Rolland ist der echte Jünger Friedrich Nietzsches, ist sein Vollender.⁻⁵⁹

Other Weimar critics were much less certain about the influence one could ascribe to Friedrich Nietzsche in Rolland's writings. Hans-Leo Götzfried considered the whole tone of Nietzsche's thought to lie in opposition to Rolland's own. Rolland's instincts were in essence democratic not autocratic. Götzfried also detected a cruel, unyielding contempt for the common man which was not to be found in *Jean-Christophe*. The abuse of Nietzsche's philosophy post-1933 is clear. No doubt it was with this in mind that Götzfried commented in a post Second World War edition:

Der Heroismus, wie Rolland ihn versteht, bewegt sich auf demokratischer Grundlage. Er will die freie und unabhängige Entfaltung jedes Individuums innerhalb der Gemeinschaft. Kein Herrenmenschentum im Sinne Nietzsches [...]. Held sein bedeutet für Rolland nicht, Übermensch, Vollbringer gewaltig großer Taten zu sein. Held ist vielmehr jeder, der seinen Anlagen und Fähigkeiten entsprechend schlicht seine Pflicht erfüllt, der tut, was er kann.⁶⁰

These differing opinions on the influence of Nietzsche clearly depend much upon varying interpretations of the philosopher's work. However, it is clear that Rolland's demand for the individual to forge within his own breast a personal metaphysic of life, variously described as Protestant, Nietzschean or democratic, was met with great enthusiasm by the Weimar scholars.

Another important area of consideration in Weimar criticism was Rolland's understanding of the role of aesthetics in art. Robert Dvorak in his 1933 study applauded Rolland's downgrading of the notion of beauty. Dvorak like

Götzfried and Lerch recognised the ethical influence of Tolstoy upon Rolland with both writers voicing their fundamental opposition to the domination of aestheticism in art:

Leo Tolstoi und Romain Rolland bezeichnen den äußersten Abstand zur Kunst und zur Theorie des l'art pour l'art. Kunst als reine Kultur der Form, als ausschließliches Ringen um artistische Vollendung ist ihren Anschauungen zutiefst entgegengesetzt.⁶¹

In *La Foire sur la Place* Rolland suggested that he who merely sought beauty of form in the artistic product lacked the true ambition of the artist:

Cette conception de l'artiste, comme d'un bon ouvrier, attentif uniquement à la perfection du métier, n'était pas sans beauté. Mais elle ne satisfaisait guère Christophe; tout en reconnaissant sa dignité professionnelle, il avait du mépris pour la pauvreté de vie qu'elle recouvrait. Il ne convenait pas qu'on écrivît pour écrire. Il ne disait pas des mots, il disait - il voulait dire - des choses.⁶²

Rolland, stated Dvorak, was absolutely correct in his assumption that a preoccupation with beauty of form only thinly disguised a spiritual emptiness. Rolland shared this suspicion of the artist with Tolstoy, yet, Dvorak insisted, he was able to free himself from the aesthetic constraints imposed by Tolstoy's teachings. It was not to Tolstoy but to Shakespeare that Dvorak looked to understand Rolland's aesthetic:

Shakespeare ist das früheste und nachhaltigste künstlerische Erlebnis Rollands gewesen. Selbst zur Zeit seines römischen Studienaufenthaltes, als ihm die Russen, die ihm in Paris so teuer gewesen waren, eine heftige Abneigung einflößten, war Shakespeare der einzige nordische Dichter, den er lesen konnte.⁶³

The object of his admiration in the work of Shakespeare was the tremendous vitalism and life it exuded:

Shakespeare wird ihm zum Symbol des wilden, freien ungehemmten Lebens. Es ist die ungeheure Vitalität dieser Kunst, die ihn anzieht,

die nichts von Müdigkeit und nicht von Skepsis weiß. Diese Kunst entspricht der Grundforderung, die Rolland an Kunst überhaupt stellt: daß sie Kraft und Leben habe.⁶⁴

In Romain Rolland's mind, Beethoven shared the same unbridled lust for life with Shakespeare. Composer and dramatist were both defined in *Jean-Christophe* as an eternal source of life: "Shakespeare était pour lui, au même titre que Beethoven, une source inépuisable de vie."⁶⁵ Life, argued Dvorak, was the very quality that Rolland demanded of art: it should live free from the constraints of both beauty and morality and, most importantly, it should be filled with an exaltation of life:

Die Kunst ist das Mittel, durch das er die Menschen seiner Zeit dem tötenden Nichts entreißen will, durch das er sie von der pessimistischen Lähmung und der nihilistischen Passivität befreien und sie mit dem großen Atem des Lebens erfüllen will.⁶⁶

Life made an appearance on almost every page of *Jean-Christophe*. It was, however, Dvorak felt, a metaphysical concept, impossible to define in precise, philosophical terminology. Life was defined and redefined in so many different aspects in *Jean-Christophe*. Its main characteristics were movement and power, a dynamic principle which governed all areas of existence, from the most primitive instincts to the highest spheres of intellectual and moral activity. It was creativity, in the physical and spiritual world, that represented for Rolland the highest form of attainment for the individual. It was the sole force capable of negating death. It is from *La Révolte* that Dvorak quoted in order to substantiate his conclusions:

Créer, dans l'ordre de la chair, ou dans l'ordre de l'esprit, c'est sortir de la prison du corps, c'est se ruer dans l'ouragan de la vie, c'est être Celui qui Est. Créer, c'est tuer la mort.⁶⁷

Life appeared personified throughout the work, in particular in the phenomena of spring and the storm. However, Dvorak found the highest artistic expression of this metaphysic of life in Christophe's own death. In the passing of Rolland's hero, his death was transfigured by his unerring faith

in the indestructible power of life. Christophe was able to find great solace in the knowledge that his own final hour of agony, was an hour of ecstasy for millions of others and even in death, Jean-Christophe's final act is a hymn to life:

Il songeait qu'à cette minute, des milliers d'êtres s'aimaient, que cette heure d'agonie pour lui, pour d'autres était une heure d'extase, qu'il en est toujours ainsi, que jamais ne tarit la joie puissante de vivre. Et, suffoquant, d'une voix qui n'obéissait plus à sa pensée, [...] il entonna un cantique à la vie.⁶⁸

It was out of this aesthetic demand that art should exalt life that Rolland's ethic grew, argued Robert Dvorak. His ethics and his aesthetics were both founded on the same underlying principle of the need to exalt life. Rolland's ethical framework, believed Dvorak, was not a fixed system, a blueprint for bourgeois morality, but rather an evolving, fluid concept which was governed only by the sense of integrity of each individual. The sole dictate lay in the need to obey and allow to flourish one's own inner spirit, one's own inner joy:

Die Rollandsche Ethik, die nur das als ethisch anerkennt, was aus innerer Lebendigkeit und freudiger Bejahung kommt, steht natürlich in einem feindlichen Gegensatz zur bürgerlichen Moral, der eine gewisse Starre und Enge anhaftet.⁶⁹

These Rolland critics were at pains, however, to underline that this apparently boundless freedom of the individual, in no way represented an invitation by Rolland to egocentric satisfaction. In fact quite the opposite, freedom brought with it an obligation to remain pure. It was Jean-Christophe's struggle for purity, purity of intent and action that allowed the reader to retain his faith in him, they argued. Everything which exalted life, light, love, joy, friendship and the will to action was good. For these German critics Rolland's ethic could be summarised most happily by a quotation from *Les Amies*:

Tout est bien qui exalte la vie. Il n'y a qu'un ennemi, c'est l'égoïsme jouisseur, qui tarit et souille les sources de la vie. Exaltez la force, exaltez la lumière, l'amour fécond, la joie du sacrifice.⁷⁰

The most pertinent example of how Rolland condemned acts of egocentric self-satisfaction was found by the Weimar scholars in Jean-Christophe's relationship with Anna Braun. This adulterous relationship, a relationship often portrayed with such ease by fellow French writers, they argued, brought Christophe to the brink of self-destruction. Rolland portrayed this episode as a major moral crisis for his protagonist which was destined to change his relationship with life and with God. E R Curtius recognised what he believed to be a deep sense of Christian, indeed puritanical morality behind Rolland's rejection of adultery:

Mit dieser befreienden, alle Schaffenskräfte entbindenden Lebensethik geht nun bei Rolland ein leidenschaftliches Bedürfnis nach Reinheit zusammen, das sich oft in puritanischen Formen äußert. Es ist das Ergebnis jahrhundertelanger christlicher Zucht und ragt in Rollands auf den Trümmern aller Traditionen errichtete selbstherrliche geistige Welt hinein wie der Zeuge einer früheren Periode der Erdgeschichte.⁷¹

Other critics were less happy to categorise this moral disgust as puritanical. Rolland, they maintained, forced his protagonist into a recognition that this socially unacceptable act was, even more importantly, morally detrimental to the soul. It dragged Jean-Christophe down by its baseness and deceit, sullyng the very source of life. Immoral acts, said Dvorak, were shown by Rolland to constitute an assault upon personal integrity, to destroy life and ultimately creative genius itself:

Hier wird es ganz deutlich, daß Immoralismus das schöpferische Leben, die schöpferische Seele vernichtet. Der Lebensbegriff, wie Rolland ihn faßt, führt deswegen als ethischer Grundbegriff nicht zu einer egoistischen Genußethik, sondern zu einer Form höchster Sittlichkeit.⁷²

The Weimar critics were nonetheless at one in considering *Jean-Christophe* to be a profoundly religious novel. Hans-Leo Götzfried closely related the concept of life as perpetual evolution to Rolland's understanding and portrayal of God in *Jean-Christophe*. Götzfried believed that while Rolland had rejected the dogma of the Catholic Church in which he had been raised, he nevertheless retained throughout his life a great respect for the Christian tradition. His morality, believed Götzfried, although of an intensely personal nature, in no way contradicted the essence of Christianity:

Auffallend ist allerdings, daß trotzdem sein späteres Leben den christlichen Geist keineswegs verleugnet. Die katholische Religion scheint ihm ein unauslöschliches Merkmal aufgeprägt zu haben. Im tiefsten Grunde seines Herzens ist er Christ geblieben, und die Heilslehre, die er später der Menschheit darreicht, unterscheidet sich kaum von den Geboten des erhabenen Religionsstifters.⁷³

Yet, wrote Götzfried, Rolland did not believe in the notion of Christ as the son of God made man. He did not accept a personification of God, as distinct from the notion of life itself. For Rolland, God was immanent, in the pantheistic fashion of the German Romantics.

Walther Küchler also believed that Rolland, like Ernest Renan and Gérard de Nerval before him, had been deeply influenced by German Romanticism. After his encounter with God in *Le Buisson ardent*, Jean-Christophe's concept of the artist as an ecstatic, his desire to become one with the universe and his pantheistic relationship with nature, all stood unmistakably under the spell of the Romantics:

Diese Auffassung des Künstlers als des von Gott, dem geheimnisvollen Weltgeiste erfüllten und inspirierten Ekstatikers, diese Auflösung der Seele des Schaffenden im All, diese fromme und liebende Hingabe, dieses fast willenlose, flüssige Tönen mit der Natur, sie ist nichts anderes, als die Auffassung der deutschen Romantiker, die immer wieder bei solchen französischen Geistern erscheint, die unter dem Zauber dieser Blüte deutschen Wesens gestanden haben.⁷⁴

The Romantics, like Rolland, had been greatly influenced by Spinoza. They were marked by the Dutch philosopher's intuitive understanding of the unity of all substance and by a belief in the infinite perfection of nature. Yet, argued some Weimar critics, there were even more ancient influences detectable in Rolland's work. Through his reading of *Jean-Christophe*, Hans-Leo Götzfried believed that the French writer felt an even greater affinity with the dualism of Empedocles.

The Fifth Century BC Greek philosopher, Empedocles of Acragas, established earth, air, fire and water as the four eternal elements. These could be combined in different ratios, however, to form the various changing and complex substances that were found in the world. The elements were fused together by love and torn apart by strife. The mixing and separating process took place in cyclical changes over vast periods of time. Love and strife struggled for ascendancy, producing constant change. Within Empedocles' cosmology, every compound substance was of necessity temporary; only the elements and the governing principles of love and strife were eternal. Götzfried felt that the stamp of Empedocles' cosmology was unmistakable in Romain Rolland's writing. It was, he maintained, Empedocles' belief in change, in constant evolution which attracted Rolland:

Die große Anziehungskraft, die Empedokles auf Rolland ausübt, hat ihren tiefsten Grund in der dynamischen Weltauffassung, die ihnen gemeinsam ist. Feste Bestimmtheiten gibt es für sie nicht. Ewiges Werden, ewige Bewegung, ewige schöpferische Erneuerung aller Lebensenergien ist das Wesen der heiligen Naturmacht, vor der sie sich ehrfürchtig beugen.⁷⁵

It was here too that E R Curtius found the most important message of *Jean-Christophe* in the understanding of life as permanent evolution. This concept was embodied most vividly for Curtius in the novel by the Rhine river. The Rhine fulfilled a number of different symbolic functions in the novel. Most importantly however, the Rhine bore the essential message of the work itself - the understanding of life as an eternal flow:

Der Rhein hat noch eine tiefere Bedeutung im *Jean-Christophe*: in ihm ist der Urantrieb und der tiefste Gehalt des ganzen Werkes versinnbildlicht: die Empfindung des Lebens als eines ewigen Fließens.⁷⁶

The Rhine therefore symbolised the ceaseless flow of life, the perception of existence as a process of infinite becoming.

Robert Dvorak, similarly, highlighted the influence of Empedocles in *Jean-Christophe*. He believed that the principles of love and strife were represented in the novel by *Lumière* and *Ténèbres*, which were portrayed as antagonistic metaphysical principles locked in perpetual struggle with one another for ascendancy. To support his argument, Dvorak cited a passage from *Le Buisson ardent* in which Jean-Christophe was confronted with a personification of the principle of light and life. It declared itself to him thus:

Je ne suis pas tout ce qui est. Je suis la Vie qui combat le Néant. Je ne suis pas le Néant. Je suis le Feu qui brûle dans la Nuit. Je ne suis pas la Nuit. Je suis le Combat éternel; et nul destin éternel ne plane sur le combat. Je suis la Volonté libre, qui lutte éternellement. Lutte et brûle avec moi!⁷⁷

The invitation was for the individual to take up the struggle against nothingness, against the dark and evil at work in the world. It was an invitation which held a particular poignancy for Hans-Leo Götzfried. For the individual was being asked to declare his allegiance with the forces of good without hope of ever winning the battle, the willingness to act without guarantee of success, armed with nothing but a faith in the justice of one's cause. That was how Götzfried saw Rolland's ethical position in *Jean-Christophe* as demonstrated again in *Le Buisson ardent*:

Dieu n'était pas pour lui le Créateur impassible, le Néron qui contemple, du haut de sa tour d'airain, l'incendie de la Ville que lui-même alluma. Dieu souffre. Dieu combat. Avec ceux qui combattent et pour tous ceux qui souffrent. Car il est la Vie, la goutte de lumière qui, tombée dans la nuit, s'étend et boit la nuit. Mais la nuit est sans

bornes, et le combat divin ne s'arrête jamais; et nul ne peut savoir quelle en sera l'issue.⁷⁸

The necessity of the individual to declare himself to an ideal, to act rather than contemplate, ran very strongly not only through Romain Rolland's work, but his life, said Götzfried:

Diesem Grundsatz ist Romain Rolland im eigenen Leben treu geblieben. Immer hat er sich für die Idee, die er als gut und gerecht erkannte, eingesetzt und hat sich nicht entmutigen lassen, selbst wenn er sie unterliegen sah.⁷⁹

Like his protagonist Aert, in the play of the same name, Rolland did not need to hope in order to act, nor to succeed in order to continue to struggle.⁸⁰

The influence of Empedocles also raised some interesting comparisons with Christianity for Götzfried, in particular on the question of attitudes towards death. Rolland shared with Empedocles a belief in a less rigid division between life and death. It was the Christian belief that death was a passing from this life into an after-life. Life, said Götzfried, represented for Rolland an eternal process of becoming, eternal movement, unstoppable creative energy, moving towards a fusion with the universe itself: "Das Wort 'Leben' ist bei Rolland im weitesten Sinne zu verstehen. Es gibt nur ein einziges Leben und dieses ist ewig. Jeder hat die Kraft, es in sich zu verwirklichen."⁸¹

Thus, argued this Weimar critic, the Christian understanding of life as essentially a preparation for the afterlife, a precursor to a happier, more just existence in the presence of God, could not satisfy Rolland, who objected to any downgrading of life on earth. A religion which suppressed the expression of joy, the joy of existence in this world, negated life itself.

Respect Christianity Rolland nonetheless did, said the critics, admiring its beauty, its struggle to overcome pain and suffering. Götzfried focused on this development of the concept of suffering in *Jean-Christophe*. In

traditional Church teaching, he argued, suffering still occupied a vital role. To the irreligious, suffering had however become an absurd state, since it could no longer be regarded as a means of proving one's worthiness for the afterlife nor did it function as a threat of eternal punishment. Götzfried believed that Rolland had given new meaning to suffering in a modern atheistic world. In *Jean-Christophe*, Rolland had demonstrated that suffering was a means to an end, for it was in the process of overcoming pain that we learned to understand the joy of life. Rolland celebrated pain as a means of cleansing the soul of all peripheral concerns, as a spurn to the individual to ever greater self-knowledge and self-control. Ultimately and most vitally for Rolland, Götzfried argued, it was a source of great creative inspiration:

Je härter Künstler ringen müssen, um ihre Schöpfungen zu zeitigen, um so größer ist der Ewigkeitswert, der diesen innewohnt. Die Menschheit würde weder einen Dante noch einen Beethoven ihr eigen nennen können, wenn nicht beide die Feuerprobe des Leidens bestanden hätten.⁸²

Götzfried shared the belief with Rolland that the most crucial test of a great artist is his ability to overcome suffering in order to proclaim the joy of life. Beethoven's maxim had become Rolland's own: "Durch Leiden zur Freude."⁸³

Weimar scholars admired the manner in which Romain Rolland combined the spiritual with the worldly struggle. *Jean-Christophe* was as concerned with spiritual integrity as with his battles on this earth. They applauded the non-dogmatic religious tone of his writing, the appreciation of life as unending evolution. They also empathised deeply with Jean-Christophe's struggle to realise his own individuality within the constraints of society. Most highly prized of all was the recognition that the absolute autonomy of the individual can only be meaningfully realised in society through the bond of love.

It was this latter point to which Walter Ostermann gave particular emphasis in his comparative study of *Jean-Christophe*, *Der grüne Heinrich* and *Wilhelm Meister* published in 1928. Wolfgang von Goethe, Gottfried Keller

and Romain Rolland were bound, Ostermann wrote, across all geographical and temporal barriers by an unerring belief in the freedom of the individual to realise his destiny. Yet all three authors created great individuals who also strove to be part of society. Wilhelm Meister, Heinrich Lee and Jean-Christophe Krafft shared the desire for social integration, sometimes at the expense of their individualism. They recognised that total freedom, bought at the cost of emotional isolation, is a sure road to disaster:

Wesentliche Menschen sind sie auch deshalb, weil sie das Leben mit seiner höchsten Freude und seinem tiefsten Schmerz bejahen, ohne daß dieses oft überschäumende Lebensgefühl und jene innere Ungebundenheit sie zu individualistischer Isolierung zu verführen vermöchte. Sie bringen vielmehr bittere Opfer der Entsagung, um ihren Platz in der Gemeinschaft zu finden und in jedem Sinne deren wertvolle Glieder zu werden.⁸⁴

Ostermann also drew interesting parallels between the critical reception of *Wilhelm Meister*, *Der grüne Heinrich* and *Jean-Christophe*. All three novels, he informed his reader, were savagely attacked by contemporary commentators, whose complaints related largely to formal questions. They complained of the lack of tight internal unity, of overly long and poor composition. "Umständlich" and "formlos" were favourite terms, whilst *Wilhelm Meister* was described by one contemporary as a "frostiges Werk der Altersschwäche."⁸⁵ Ostermann did not wish to defend the novels from such attacks. Indeed, it was obvious to him that in all three cases, the novels were stylistically flawed. His point was, however, this: to attempt to measure the value of a work of art solely by reference to formal and aesthetic considerations was superficial. To state that these novels were poorly written in no way detracted from the sense of awe they inspired and would continue to inspire in the reader:

Durch die 'Fehler', die eine oberflächliche Kritik in Werken vom Umfang des *Wilhelm Meister*, des *Grünen Heinrich* und des *Jean-Christophe* nur zu leicht sucht und findet, wird die innere Ehrfurcht vor dem großen Werk nicht berührt. [...] Fehlerlosigkeit im Sinne dieser Formalästhetik ist kein Kennzeichen der Kunst Goethes, Kellers

und Rollands, wohl aber ist es umspannende Weite und wirkende Kraft.⁸⁶

In any event, argued Ostermann, whatever they lacked in perfection of form was more than compensated by their breadth of humanity: "Was den Werken an formaler Vollendung abgeht, wird reich ersetzt durch höhere, 'menschliche' Werte."⁸⁷ It was therefore only the superficial critic who would wish to pursue a purely formal analysis without recognising this fact. It is not these works of art which were inadequate, but the criteria used to judge them.

This also represented the view of Eugen Lerch. Lerch similarly drew parallels between Romain Rolland and the German classical tradition, comparing the French writer to Goethe and Schiller. All three, he argued, exhibited a predilection for philosophical debate and a belief in spiritual and social ideals which made their writing appear on occasion dated:

Der Einwand des Zuviel an Gedanklichem ist ja auch der Einwand, den wir gegen unsere klassischen Dichtungen erheben, der sie uns altmodisch erscheinen läßt.⁸⁸

Public taste, commented Lerch, had been corrupted by the realist novel. The modern reader demanded action, not meditation: "Wir sind verdorben durch den realistischen Roman. Der gibt freilich nur Anschauung."⁸⁹ Rolland, very like Goethe and Schiller, gave a seriousness and depth to his writing which lay beyond the contemporary critic for whom "Geist und Gefühl ist nichts, Handlung, Ausstattung ist alles."⁹⁰ Both Ostermann and Lerch felt that Rolland could help the contemporary reader to an understanding of the classical tradition in Germany. Rolland occupied an intermediary role because his *Weltanschauung* was essentially the same as Goethe and Schiller whilst his concerns were more relevant to the modern world. Rolland shared with them an understanding of art which elevated it beyond the realm of aesthetic enjoyment:

Er will nicht unterhalten, sondern erschüttern. [...] Und dieses Gedankliche, dessen die Romankunst von Gestern und noch von Heute, die Romankunst der Realisten, Naturalisten, Impressionisten, uns so sehr entwöhnt hat - dieses Gedankliche ist Erbgut und Merkmal aller großen Kunst. So lehrt die Kunst unserer Klassiker uns Romain Rolland am besten verstehen (wie umgekehrt seine Kunst der beste Führer ist in die verschüttete Welt unserer klassischen Dichter).⁹¹

German Rolland scholars of the Weimar era focused on his contribution to the *Renouveau*, his presentation to the world of a little known France, his faith in humanity to burn bright against evil. For those many thousands of readers to whom Jean-Christophe had become a friend, wrote E R Curtius, it represented a "lebendige geistige Kraft, [...] eine gewaltige Predigt der Energie."⁹² As such it lived through the hearts of the people it touched and that was something that no critic could take away from the novel.

The critical studies upon which this present chapter is based shared the conviction that Rolland's creative writing constituted his most important contribution to humanity. Although a majority of these Weimar scholars admired Rolland as a man, his integrity, his strength of conviction, they sought to understand him through his writing. To borrow D H Lawrence's expression, they trusted the work and in it they found the man. As Hans-Leo Götzfried commented: "Die Werke selbst bilden das beste Zeugnis für die innere Wahrhaftigkeit des Schriftstellers."⁹³ The chapter which follows will attempt to show how German critics began to separate Rolland from his writing, in order to focus upon his moral and political importance to inter-war Europe. The consequences of this trend undoubtedly undermined Rolland's impact as a writer.

Let us, however, reiterate the conclusions of the present chapter. Romain Rolland's Weimar critics thought very highly indeed of *Jean-Christophe*. It was, in their view, a masterpiece. If certain critics had denied the work the status of art, it was argued, then they had failed to grasp the true meaning of that word. Art, in its purest form, represented a search for truth and meaning, a search for life. In Rolland, they found no better representative:

Wenn die wahre Definition des Dichters die ist, die ihn einen Schöpfer von Leben nennt, dann ist Romain Rolland ein Dichter.⁹⁴

Notes

- 1 Lerch, Eugen: *Romain Rolland und die Erneuerung der Gesinnung*. Max Huber Verlag, Munich 1926. (Hereafter referred to as *Die Erneuerung*), p 259.
- 2 See: Schaffner, Jakob: "Romain Rollands Michelangelo." In: *Das neue Buch*, vol II, no 3, Berlin 1920. Schaffner expressed his cynicism towards the role of Rolland and his fellow intellectuals: "Daß sich ihm ein Strudel von Intellektuellen aus mehreren Ländern [...] angeschlossen hat, ist keine Wirkung. Der Weltkrieg ging seinen Gang."
- 3 *Die Erneuerung*, p 170.
- 4 Ibid, p 165.
- 5 Ibid, p 171.
- 6 See: Richter, Elise: "Romain Rolland." In: *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, vol III, 1920, pp 299-312.
- 7 *Die Erneuerung*, p 190.
- 8 Küchler, Walther: *Romain Rolland, Henri Barbusse, Fritz von Unruh. Vier Vorträge*. Verlagsdruckerei Würzburg GmbH, 1919, (hereafter referred to as Küchler), p 27.
- 9 Ibid, p 23.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid, p 30.
- 12 Ibid, p 40.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid, p 41.

15 Götzfried, Hans-Leo: *Romain Rolland. Das Weltbild im Spiegel seiner Werke*. J. Engelhorns Nachf., Stuttgart 1931, (hereafter referred to as Götzfried), p 83.

16 *Die Erneuerung*, p 169.

17 Ibid, p 192.

18 Ibid, p 197.

19 Ibid, p 186.

20 Küchler, p 8.

21 Götzfried, p 83.

22 Curtius, Ernst Robert: *Die literarischen Wegbereiter des neuen Frankreich*, Kiepenheuer, Potsdam 1918, (hereafter referred to as *Wegbereiter*), p 237.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid, pp 9-10.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid, p 28.

27 Nietzsche, Friedrich: *Götzendämmerung*. In: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol VIII, p 144. After: Dvorak, Robert: *Das Ethische und das Ästhetische bei Romain Rolland*. Buch und Kunstdruckerei Wilh. Postberg, Bottrop 1933, (hereafter referred to as Dvorak), p 8.

28 Nietzsche, Friedrich: *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*. After Dvorak, Ibid.

29 *Die Erneuerung*, pp 11-12.

30 Ibid, p 15.

- 31 Ibid, pp 41-42.
- 32 Dvorak, p 5.
- 33 Ibid, p 6.
- 34 De Vogüé, E M: *Le roman russe*. After Dvorak, p 10.
- 35 *Wegbereiter*, p 237.
- 36 Ibid, p 73.
- 37 *Die Erneuerung*, p 31.
- 38 Curtius, p 250.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid, p 73.
- 41 *Die Erneuerung*, p 35.
- 42 Dvorak, p 12.
- 43 Curtius, p 260.
- 44 Curtius, Ernst Robert: *Französischer Geist im 20. Jahrhundert*. Francke Verlag, Bern 1952, p 520.
- 45 Götzfried, p 26.
- 46 Tolstoy, Leo: Letter to Romain Rolland dated 4 October 1887. In: *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, vol III, no 9, 1902.
- 47 Götzfried, pp 28-29. Author's emphasis.
- 48 *Die Erneuerung*, p 17.

- 49 Ibid, p 136. Eugen Lerch is simplifying Rolland's view of women here. It is in fact a complex and fascinating question which has traditionally not been adequately addressed by Rolland criticism.
- 50 Ibid, p 97.
- 51 Ibid, p 96.
- 52 Ibid, p 100. Author's emphasis.
- 53 *Jean-Christophe*, vol III, pp 323-324.
- 55 Stefan Zweig we remember had greeted *Jean-Christophe* in 1912 as "noch mehr ein ethisches Ereignis als ein literarisches." See: Chapter I, note 102. His influence in shaping Rolland's enduring critical image in Germany will be considered in Chapter VI.
- 54 Curtius, p 105.
- 56 Ibid, p 107.
- 57 Ibid, p 108.
- 58 Ibid, pp 107-108.
- 59 *Die Erneuerung*, pp 56-57. Author's emphasis.
- 60 Götzfried, Hans-Leo: *Romain Rolland und die Erneuerung des deutschen Geistes*. Diplax-Verlag, Erlangen 1946, p 68.
- 61 Dvorak, p 14.
- 62 *Jean-Christophe*, vol II, p 216.
- 63 Dvorak, p 17.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 *Jean-Christophe*, vol I, p 429.

- 66 Dvorak, p 25.
- 67 *Jean-Christophe*, vol I, p 362.
- 68 Ibid, vol III, p 480.
- 69 Dvorak, p 21.
- 70 *Jean-Christophe*, vol III, p 132.
- 71 Curtius, p 103.
- 72 Dvorak, p 22.
- 73 Götzfried, p 51.
- 74 Küchler, p 20.
- 75 Götzfried, p 58.
- 76 Curtius, p 99.
- 77 *Jean-Christophe*, vol III, p 319.
- 78 Ibid, vol III, p 321.
- 79 Götzfried, p 56.
- 80 Rolland, Romain: *Aert*. Editions Albin Michel, Paris 1970, p 117.
Preface: "Je n'ai pas besoin d'espérer pour entreprendre, et de réussir pour persévérer." Quoted from William of Orange.
- 81 Götzfried, p 58.
- 82 Ibid, p 86.
- 83 Ibid. Quoted after Götzfried.
- 84 Ostermann, Walter: "Das Bild des Menschen in Goethes *Wilhelm Meister*, Kellers *Grünem Heinrich* und R Rollands *Jean-Christophe*." In:

Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher. Verlag von G Koester, Jahrbuch 1928, p 55, (hereafter referred to as Ostermann).

85 Laube. After: Ostermann, p 4.

86 Ostermann, p 6.

87 Ibid.

88 *Die Erneuerung*, p 224.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid, p 127.

91 Ibid, pp 257-258.

92 Curtius, pp 99-100.

93 Götzfried, p 98.

94 See note 1.

Chapter VI

WEIMAR: THE ENDURING IMAGE

Romain Rollands
Menschtum überragt
sein Dichtertum.¹

Das Höchste, was der
Mensch erreichen
kann, ist ein heroischer
Lebenslauf.²

The present chapter will concentrate on the criticism of the Weimar years produced outside of the domain of the Universities. Much of this criticism was written in essay form in journals, reviews and newspapers and due to the restrictions of the medium was necessarily less detailed than the work of the books and theses examined in the previous chapter. This was, however, to be the criticism read by the vast majority of the educated public and it hence determined to a large extent the reputation that Romain Rolland enjoyed in Weimar Germany. It was also instrumental in founding the enduring image of his life and work beyond.

One of the most important contributions to Rolland criticism at this time came in 1920 with the publication of Stefan Zweig's biography. This study became the most popular introduction to Rolland in Germany, going into a third edition by 1926, and Zweig clearly played a central role in determining his reputation in the inter-war period. More than an analysis of the *oeuvre*, the study created an influential portrait of the man and it is for this reason that it is dealt with here in some depth. The biography was written with Rolland's help and support and Zweig reviewed the familial background and early

creative years of the French author. He was made party to privileged information and the resulting study is undoubtedly informed by a deep knowledge and understanding of his subject. Indeed, it is still recognised as one of the most important studies of Rolland.³

It is hence with a clear acknowledgement of the power of Zweig's study that the following, on occasion questioning, analysis of the work is made. There is a great sense that Stefan Zweig wrote his biography from a very personal point of view and one which illustrated the nature of his own relationship with Rolland. This undoubted intimacy and emotional commitment left Zweig open to the criticism that his work lacked objectivity and proper scholastic rigour. It was, commented Robert Dvorak in 1933, essentially a work by one artist about another, "ohne wissenschaftliche Ambitionen."⁴ It was in fact much more than this: it was a labour of love. From Zweig's wartime diary, it is possible to understand the depth of feeling that the Austrian writer had for his "cher maître": "Ich liebe ihn immer mehr," he noted on 23 December 1914.⁵ In a later entry dated 24 March 1915, Zweig commented again with great affection on a letter received that day from Rolland: "Atem aus der Welt, Güte über die Trauer. Ich sehe den Brief wie einen Regenbogen auf verdüstertem Himmel. Werde ich je genug dankbar sein können?"⁶ Indeed it was out of this sense of gratitude that the biography was written, as Zweig freely acknowledged: "Dieses Buch will nicht nur Darstellung eines europäischen Werkes sein, sondern vor allem Bekenntnis zu einem Menschen, der mir und manchem das stärkste moralische Erlebnis unserer Weltwende war."⁷ *Der Mann und das Werk*, he conceded, had been consciously written in the vein of Rolland's own *Vies héroïques*:

Gedacht im Geiste seiner heroischen Biographien, die Größe eines Künstlers immer am Maße seiner Menschlichkeit und in der notwendigen Wirkung auf die sittliche Erhebung aufzeigen - gedacht in diesem Geiste, ist es geschrieben aus dem Gefühl der Dankbarkeit, mitten in unserer verlorenen Zeit das Wunder einer solchen reinen Existenz erlebt zu haben.⁸

Gratitude was then one of the key emotions to inspire Zweig's biography. It was written in the spirit of the disciple rather than the scholar.

Dragoljub-Dragan Nedeljkovic suggested in his study of the two writers published in 1970, that it would have been difficult to find "un ami plus fidèle à Rolland et un homme de lettres qui ait fait plus pour son oeuvre."⁹ In Nedeljkovic's words Zweig became the "principal vulgarisateur de sa pensée et de son oeuvre en Allemagne."¹⁰ Yet the 'stronger' party in this relationship would certainly seem to have been Rolland. It was Zweig who looked to Rolland for moral guidance, who found strength in Rolland's solid ethical convictions, particularly during the war years. Zweig's attitudes were distinctly reverential and submissive and his portrait of the French writer is consequently idealistic, indeed at times idealised. Nedeljkovic points out that Zweig himself "ne résistait pas toujours au *poison idéaliste*."¹¹

So, for example, Zweig's portrayal of the relationship between Charles Péguy and Rolland does not reflect the full picture of events. It was quite true, as Zweig maintained, that Rolland did not receive one centime from Péguy's *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* for the publication of *Jean-Christophe*. The case, said Zweig, was exemplary in modern literature, for Péguy and Rolland had demonstrated an unparalleled spirit of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice. They effectively established a permanent monument to French idealism:

Aber nur um ihren Idealismus zu erhärten, um ein moralisches Beispiel zu schaffen, verzichteten diese heroischen Menschen ein Jahrzehnt auf Besprechungen, auf Verbreitung und Honorar, auf die heilige Dreifaltigkeit aller Literatengläubigkeit.¹²

Yet the history of the publication of *Jean-Christophe* did not end there, as Zweig implied. Rolland and Péguy publicly wrangled over the rights for the novel. In February 1904 Rolland was approached by Valdagne, director of the publishing house Ollendorf, for the right to reprint *Jean-Christophe*. This led to conflict, for Péguy insisted on his claim to the copyright. He even instigated a public debate on this matter in the *Cahiers*, writing:

Les oeuvres que nous publions appartiennent aux *Cahiers*, du seul fait de cette publication, en toute propriété littéraire, sans aucune réserve, et sans autre signification ni contrat.¹³

Romain Rolland resisted this pressure to renounce the rights to his own creation and Péguy was forced to concede defeat in November 1905. The agreement reached was that the remaining volumes of *Jean-Christophe* should be published first in the *Cahiers*, appearing slightly later in an Ollendorf edition. Rolland received payment for *Jean-Christophe* for this later edition. Indeed it was the literary and not least financial success of the novel which allowed him to retire from his Chair of Music at the Sorbonne in the summer of 1912 to become a professional writer.¹⁴ In a letter to Sofia Bertolini of 7 March 1914 Rolland referred to his literary income.¹⁵ He recounted how he had been able to move to a more comfortable apartment, after twelve years in which he had not even had an armchair in which to relax. Rolland also regretted that he had come to possess, a decade too late, that which his ex-wife had so desired: a literary reputation and financial security. It would be unrealistic to imagine that an artist had no interest in the success of his creations - yet this is the impression that Zweig was happy to leave with us. It is one illustration of the manner in which Zweig idealised his subject, making him appear above the concerns of the human domain, stressing his ethereal, spiritual superiority.

Stefan Zweig was also later to suggest that Romain Rolland had received the sum of a quarter of a million francs for the Nobel Prize, every last centime of which he had donated to the *Agence de Prisonniers de Guerre* in order, he wrote, that his words and his deeds might be one: "damit sein Wort die Tat und die Tat sein Wort bezeuge. Ecce Homo! Ecce poeta."¹⁶ Rolland denied both that he had ever received such an amount, or that he had ever given such amounts away, though many charitable donations were made.¹⁷ Again it is clear that Zweig was not averse to some manipulation of the evidence. The main thrust of the biography being to demonstrate the incorruptible, selfless integrity of a great man, Zweig was not afraid to idealise in order to secure the admiration of the reader. As Margaret Rogister stated, Zweig's attitude was nothing short of "adulatory."¹⁸

This is perhaps a point of weakness in the Zweig biography. He wished to elevate the man Romain Rolland above his work and above his time. The ambition would seem to have been to place Rolland on a pedestal up to which lesser mortals might gaze in reverential admiration. Rolland's apparent lack of concern for the material world was thus exaggerated, as we have seen, to underline his purity of purpose. In a letter to Hermann Bahr of 25 December 1914, Stefan Zweig had written: "Ein einziger Mensch hat mir wahrhaften Trost in diesen Tagen gegeben: Romain Rolland. Seine Leistung wird einst eine Legende sein, ein Beispiel über Jahrhunderte."¹⁹

Der Mann und das Werk is undoubtedly Zweig's contribution to the creation of that legend. As the biography progresses, Stefan Zweig's central thesis becomes clear. It was his belief that Rolland had been chosen by fate to represent martyred humanity in the cataclysm of the First World War. Zweig argued that Rolland's fame, earned with such desperate difficulty as he himself had illustrated, was primarily devised by the hand of destiny to ensure the French writer an international audience in 1914. His thesis then: Rolland's literary success was only given meaning by his role in the Great War. The "Kunstwerk" to which Zweig dedicated the main thrust of his study was not the literary work but the life of the Frenchman, the "Kunstwerk eines Lebens."²⁰ Fame and Rolland had danced a curious tango, he wrote, with the French author's reputation remaining uncertain until his calm and steadying influence was needed most:

Zwischen Rolland und dem Ruhm ist ein geheimnisvolles Verhältnis [...]. 1912 ist er noch unbekannt, 1914 ein Weltruhm. Mit einem Schrei der Überraschung erkennt eine Generation ihren Führer. Es ist mystischer Sinn in diesem Ruhm Romain Rollands, wie in jedem Geschehnis seines Lebens. Aber er kommt noch zur rechten Stunde, er kommt vor dem Krieg. Wie ein Schwert gibt er sich ihm in die Hand.²¹

With the outbreak of war, Rolland's right to privacy, to life as a writer and artist, had died. He was forced to assume the role of spokesman for

humanity, the conscience of the world: "Er ist nicht mehr Schriftsteller, Dichter, Künstler, nicht mehr Eigenwesen. Er ist die Stimme Europas in seiner tiefsten Qual. Er ist das *Gewissen der Welt*."²² Rolland became in Zweig's estimation a protector of the holy flame, embodying continued faith in humanity in an age of almost complete barbarity. As an unforgettable example of moral and spiritual heroism, he was able to fulfil the most important task that destiny had fashioned for him.

This demonstration of total commitment to humanity was for Zweig even more impressive than any single piece of literature. Rolland now incorporated within his own breast the idealism of his two greatest fictional creations, Jean-Christophe and Olivier. Jean-Christophe had risen from his grave to be resurrected in the person of the poet himself: "Jean-Christophe hatte seinen Sarg gesprengt und war auferstanden in der Gestalt seines Dichters."²³ The Austrian writer believed that the success of *Jean-Christophe* had committed Rolland to this position. His literary success, however, was no crown of laurels, but a crown of thorns, a sword with which to combat man's inhumanity to man.

Zweig's portrait of Rolland's wartime stance is that of the martyr, standing alone against the madness of millions:

Allein beginnt er den Kampf gegen den Wahnsinn von Millionen.
Und in diesem Augenblick lebt das europäische Gewissen - mit Haß
und Hohn verjagt aus allen Ländern und Herzen - einzig in seiner
Brust.²⁴

It is clear now, as it was no doubt in 1920, that the Great War had many opponents from the outset, including those in Triple Alliance countries themselves. It therefore seems something of an over-estimation to portray Rolland as standing wholly alone in his condemnation of war. It is meant with no disrespect to suggest that Rolland, living on neutral territory, had less to fear than, for example, Karl Liebknecht or Rosa Luxemburg whose campaign against Wilhelmine aggression led first to imprisonment and ultimately to their brutal murders. Indeed it was Romain Rolland himself

who was one of the first to acknowledge the bravery of Liebknecht and Luxemburg to whom he dedicated *Les Précurseurs*. One might argue that Rolland was in fact less threatening to the authorities because his campaign touched the intelligentsia much more than the populace as a whole.

Stefan Zweig was doubtless highlighting the impact of Rolland upon his own life and his intellectual development. As we have seen from earlier quotations, Rolland was Zweig's single most important influence during the isolation of the war years. Through Rolland, he continued to belong to a cosmopolitan milieu, one in which contacts even to enemy nations persisted. Through Rolland, he met and entertained relationships which transcended national boundaries: "Das Wunderbarste dieser Sphäre aber war, daß dank Rolland auch die feindlichen Brüder von dieser geistigen Gemeinschaft nicht ausgeschlossen waren."²⁵ Zweig underlined the ways in which Rolland lent strength to those who were less strong, less confident. The Austrian writer included himself in this category, as he acknowledged:

Rolland hat nicht einen Augenblick seine deutschen Freunde verleugnet. [...] Gerade für die noch nicht Selbstsicheren, bedeutete diese vorbildliche Existenz eine wunderbare Befeuerung durch die aufrechte Haltung, die jeden Jüngeren beschämte.²⁶

This reference to friendship and shame is not a coincidental one.²⁷ It cannot be the task of the present study to examine Stefan Zweig's own role in the Great War. C E Williams has, however, highlighted a number of discrepancies and contradictions between the public and private convictions of the Austrian writer in *The Broken Eagle*. His pacifist position must be regarded, Williams concluded, as a mixture of "compromise and weakness."²⁸ The article "An die Freunde im Fremdland" appeared in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on 19 September 1914. In this Zweig bade farewell to his foreign friends. It drew a sharp rebuke from Rolland: "Je suis plus fidèle que vous à notre Europe, cher Stefan Zweig, et je ne dis adieu à aucun de mes amis."²⁹ This and further examples prompted Williams to comment on the sense of bewilderment felt by Zweig: "Zweig's article illustrates the bemusement of an apolitical writer peremptorily enmeshed in the toils of a

European war."³⁰ It is perhaps within the context of Zweig's own hesitancy that we can best understand his adulatory portrait of Rolland. How much greater the Frenchman must have appeared to a man who even in 1916 was still, publicly at least, celebrating war as an inevitable and divine ordination.³¹

Zweig portrayed Rolland as a saintly figure, a model existence, who inspired the kind of following that might be expected at the inception of a new faith: "In diesem Kreise der Menschen um ihn war ein Gefühl der Gemeinschaft wie in jeder Gemeinde einer beginnenden Religion."³² This is the enduring image that the Austrian writer created of his hero: the serene and unerring campaigner against the hatred and barbarism engendered by war. It represented the beginnings of the cult of the man Rolland. Zweig was followed down this path by a large number of the German-speaking critics reviewed in this chapter. It is perfectly clear from numerous public and private declarations that Rolland did indeed inspire many individuals to a search for inner truth and personal freedom from the oppression of all ideologies. Wilhelm Herzog expressed this very forcefully in his preface to the 1921 German edition of Rolland's *Tolstoi*. The notion of Rolland as a conscience of Europe is repeated from Zweig's biography here, as it was on numerous subsequent occasions:

Was Tolstoi für die junge Generation Frankreichs und Deutschlands um 1890 geworden war, das wurde nicht wenigen unter uns Romain Rolland während der Jahre 1914 - 1918: der erste Bekenner, der Aufrüttler, der Feind dieser wahnwitzigen "Ordnung", die Stimme des Gewissens Europas.³³

As the present study has highlighted, however, the inner turmoil that beset Rolland during the war years was great indeed. It is therefore curious to find little reference to this in *Der Mann und das Werk*, or indeed in so many of the subsequent tributes to Rolland's wartime role. Zweig would seem to have wished to crush any impression of uncertainty, fear or error. His Rolland is serene, omniscient, correct.

Whilst it would be wrong to deny the biographer his right to represent favourably, perhaps Zweig achieved this portrait at the expense of Rolland's complex personality. Rolland was for Zweig the "milder Mönch"³⁴ content to labour in isolation in his "kleines mönchisches Zimmer,"³⁵ to instruct the world in matters of brotherly love. We gain little sense of the immense intellectual and spiritual turmoil that the War unleashed in Rolland, of the daily struggle that he fought in order not to sink into the depths of depression and despair. This is quite clearly discernible in retrospect from the 1952 publication of Rolland's *Journal des années de guerre*. He wrote in his diary on 13 March 1915:

Je passe les journées les plus tristes de ma vie, dans un sentiment de solitude morale, de détresse de coeur et d'esprit, auquel viennent s'ajouter d'autres chagrins intimes. A certaines heures, je n'y tiens plus. Je me jette sur ma chaise longue, je me couvre le visage, et je cherche à goûter la saveur de la mort.³⁶

Zweig would not have been privy to such intimate knowledge of Rolland's state of mind. The French author's published articles of 1914 and 1915, later collected as *Au-dessus de la mêlée*, do nonetheless show a man in turmoil, a man struggling with the seemingly irreconcilable concepts of patriotism and brotherly love. These are matters which were discussed by a number of German critics during the War as earlier chapters of this study have shown. Indeed Rolland's diary also records letters from Stefan Zweig which reproached the Frenchman for being biased against the Triple Alliance. In a letter of 23 June 1915 Zweig rebuked Rolland in affectionate but firm terms for his article "Le meurtre des élites." Rolland commented:

Il est dans mon lot de mécontenter tous les partis. Je reçois du fidèle Stefan Zweig une lettre, qui me reproche, en termes affectueux, mais très *sentis*, mon dernier article: "Le meurtre des élites." Il trouve que c'est une "chute en arrière."³⁷

As René Cheval so clearly showed in *Romain Rolland, la France, l'Allemagne et la guerre*, the image of a man standing above the *mêlée* represented only half of

what was ultimately a more interesting story.³⁸ Is it not the inner struggle of the man to work towards truth which is more engaging? Does the fact, as Rolland himself acknowledged, that he on occasion fell far short of his objectives, not teach us more about our limitations as human beings than the erecting of a serene, omniscient and saintly figure above the fray?

At the end of the War, however, Stefan Zweig obviously chose to gloss over any differences of opinion and misgivings he had felt about aspects of Romain Rolland's wartime publications. He preferred to leave the reader of his biography with the image of a man who had conquered all human prejudice:

Gerechtigkeitswillen sahen wir in seiner Gestalt restlos gelebte Überzeugung geworden; mit dem ganzen Gewicht seines Namens, seines Ruhmes, seiner künstlerischen Kraft einen Menschen aufrecht stehen wider Vaterland und Ferne, den Blick geradeaus erhoben in den Himmel des überzeitlichen Glaubens.³⁹

Few in Germany doubted Rolland's integrity in the search for truth. Zweig might certainly have argued that he sought to capture the essence of the man in his study and that all other concerns were peripheral. Indeed, Zweig was in good company in representing this line of thought. For throughout the Twenties in Germany and in particular in 1926, the year of Rolland's sixtieth birthday, tributes flooded the pages of newspapers and journals in unquestioning celebration of the Frenchman's wartime contribution to the cause of humanity.

These were again essentially a celebration of the cult of the man, not the artist. "Ja dieser Rolland ist heute der große Mensch dieser Welt," declared Kurt Kersten in *Die neue Rundschau* in November 1919, "und seine Art wird die künftige sein."⁴⁰ No Frenchman was more revered and admired in Germany than Rolland wrote Margarete Rothbarth in March 1920: "Kaum ein Franzose hat in Deutschland heute so großes Ansehen, wird so verehrt und geachtet wie Romain Rolland."⁴¹ The terms of reference used to describe Rolland were often even more glowing, more reverential than Stefan

Zweig's own. Rolland's personal integrity was lauded above all else. For the pages of Vienna's *Neue Freie Presse* in January 1921 Anna Nußbaum penned the following portrait:

Das ist er. Der Treueste der Treuen. Selbst die Verkörperung adeligster Freundschaft wandelt er im Innersten alles, was sich ihm naht. Um ihn weht der starke, befruchtende Atem allumfassender Liebe und Brüderlichkeit, das tiefe, mitfühlende Verstehen der leidenden Kreatur.⁴²

The tone of these tributes is illustrative of the manner in which Rolland was honoured in Germany. Wilhelm Michel, writing in 1920, described Rolland's personal qualities thus:

Seine Umrisse stehen leuchtend und eindeutig vor der wortlosen Empfindung: Wärme, Liebe, Kraft, Heldentum, Fülle irdischen Schmerzes, Bejahen und Erleiden des Lebens, baumhaftes Dulden, tierhafte Innigkeit und Freude, grenzenlose Unschuld und klarste menschliche Gemessenheit.⁴³

It is hard to imagine a more positive and effusive description of a public figure. For Michel, Rolland was not a writer but the most striking living example of human kindness, a flag bearer of future humanity: "Durch eine Zeit, die den Menschen zum sinnlosen Tatinstrument zu vereinseitigen strebt, trägt Rolland mit dem Schritt eines Fahnenträgers das *Ideal* menschlicher Totalität."⁴⁴ The belief in Romain Rolland as the protector of the sacred flame of humanity is one which is constantly reiterated. Joseph Chapiro, in the *Berliner Tageblatt* on 29 January 1920, similarly lavished unreserved praise on Rolland. No work of art could be more beautiful, he argued, could demand more admiration than the Frenchman's wartime stance. Indeed the premise that the value of a work of art was ultimately only to be judged by the value of its author had never been so clear to him as in the case of Romain Rolland:

Nach meiner Überzeugung ist keine Dichtung Romain Rollands so schön, keine vermag eine größere Bewunderung in der von Haß

zerrissenen Welt hervorzurufen, als die Gesinnung, die dieser Mann während des Krieges bekundet hat. In dieser Gesinnung liegt seine Stärke, und die gleiche Gesinnung hat er eben in anderen gesucht. Der Grundsatz "Der Wert eines Menschen bestimmt den Wert seines Werkes" ist niemals so folgerichtig bewiesen worden, wie in den letzten Jahren.⁴⁵

In 1926 a volume was published in Rolland's honour, containing tributes from friends across the globe. *Liber Amicorum Romain Rolland* also carried a number of contributions from the German-speaking world which echoed similar unreserved love for the man as expressed in the immediate post-war era. "Romain Rolland ist das beobachtende Gewissen der denkenden Menschheit," wrote Albert Schweitzer in his single sentence tribute.⁴⁶ Sigmund Freud added his voice to the celebration of such rare human achievement: "Unvergesslicher, durch welche Mühen und Leiden haben Sie sich wohl zu solcher Höhe der Menschlichkeit emporgerungen!"⁴⁷ Rolland's image as the incarnation of human idealism lived on unchanged for Professor Georg Nicolai: "Romain Rolland ist Pfadfinder und Wegweiser der Zukunft, er verkörpert uns Lebenden das Ideal der reinen *Humanität*."⁴⁸

The cult of the man Romain Rolland was very strong in the Twenties, particularly in liberal and left-wing circles. However, one Swiss commentator allowed himself the liberty of remarking in January 1926 in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* that the German-speaking world was represented in *Liber Amicorum* with few exceptions by relatively minor intellectual figures: "Darf man vielleicht noch bemerken, daß Deutschland in diesem *Liber Amicorum* mit Ausnahme nicht eben durch wesentliche Geister vertreten ist."⁴⁹ He suggested that in spite of the many expressions of blind love, Rolland was living on a reputation that was under threat. For outside of those circles in which he commanded unquestioning support for his idealism, doubts about his artistic value had returned to the surface, as we shall see later in this chapter.

Indeed even the legendary status of Rolland's wartime stance was not allowed to live on in Weimar Germany without the appearance of some cracks. The

legend came under attack from a number of sides and one of the most threatening was time. It seemed inevitable that as the experience of war retreated with advancing years, so too would the sense of Rolland's achievements. Stefan Zweig spoke of this problematic aspect of the reception of Rolland's wartime writing, acknowledging that the passing years had weakened the impact of his interventions for coming generations. Even by 1920, he conceded, the essays and manifestos had begun to appear surprisingly measured and unremarkable. To some they might even seem banal:

Heute mag (für einen flüchtigen Augenblick) der Zeitpunkt gekommen sein, wo viele dieser Worte als banal gelten werden, weil sie inzwischen von tausenden Nachschreibern kleingemünzt wurden. Wir aber haben sie zu einer Zeit gekannt, da jedes dieser Worte wie ein Peitschenschlag wirkte, und die Empörung, die sie damals verursachten, bezeugt das historische Maß ihrer Notwendigkeit.⁵⁰

The reader of the 1920's, it seemed, had already forgotten the depths to which Europe's intellectuals had sunk. They needed, wrote Zweig, in order to understand the impact of Rolland's seemingly mild message, to remember that this was a time in which Jesus Christ would have been crucified again for preaching brotherly love.

One of Rolland's English admirers from *Liber Amicorum* concluded:

It is a sad commentary upon our period that in expressing one's sense of Romain Rolland's achievement, one's thoughts turn less to the masterpieces with which he has enriched literature than to the moral platitudes which he has had to incarnate.⁵¹

If Stefan Zweig feared that the impact of Rolland's essays had been lost after fewer than two years, how much less they might speak to generations born ten, twenty, or fifty years hence? Pinning Rolland's reputation on his personality and his life therefore necessarily brought with it the seeds of transience. Yet this was the man whom Zweig had come to love, the fearless campaigner against hatred, the man who had sacrificed his reputation in the

name of truth and justice. This was to be the image Zweig handed down to succeeding generations.

Rolland's greatest work of art, he believed, was his life and his ability to influence and inspire others to follow their own consciences, to live out the moral imperatives that society would so often have them ignore. Stefan Zweig spoke of Rolland's personal charisma, of "jene unmittelbare Wirkung auf die Menschen, jene erläuternde, fühlende, erhebende, bildende und begeisternde Kraft,"⁵² used to such effect on large numbers of people. No single individual could claim, Zweig contended, to have exerted such a broad based and positive influence: "ich glaube nicht, daß irgendein anderer Künstler unserer Tage eine so reinigende, so stärkende und beseelende Wirkung auf so viele Menschen gehabt habe wie Romain Rolland."⁵³

Romain Rolland correspondence came from all over the world. The extent of this is evident from the most cursory examination of the archive material now available at the *Bibliothèque Nationale* in Paris. It was Zweig's contention that this correspondence would prove to be among Rolland's most beautiful creations:

Aber auch künstlerisch scheinen mir diese Briefe, von denen manche inzwischen veröffentlicht worden sind, das Reinste, Reifste, was Rolland geschaffen, denn Tröstung ist ja der tiefste Sinn seiner Kunst, und hier, wo er von Menschen zu Menschen sprach, völlig hingegeben, hat er eine rhythmische Kraft, die den schönsten Gedichten aller Zeiten sich ebenbürtig erweisen [...]. Wie Colas Breugnon kann er sagen: "Dies ist mein schönstes Werk: die Seelen, die ich gestaltet habe."⁵⁴

Zweig counted himself among those souls "created" by Rolland:

"Niemandem habe ich menschlich mehr zu danken als seiner herrlich humanen Gegenwart."⁵⁵ No words were too great for Zweig to describe the beauty of Rolland's idealism. His example, wrote Zweig, would live eternally as a shining model of intellectual heroism, more influential and more gripping than the written word could ever be: "Wie er es getan hat, ist

uns allen unvergeßliches Beispiel geistigen Heldentums geworden, ein Erlebnis, noch hinreißender als das geschriebene Werk."⁵⁶ Rolland stood now as an embodiment of the idealism of Christophe and Olivier; word had become deed, art had been transformed into life.

There were many critics, however, for whom Rolland's wartime stance was not entirely convincing. He was attacked from four different angles. There were those who found *Au-dessus de la mêlée* confused and biased; those for whom *Les Précurseurs* was too radical and communistic; those who could not support his self-imposed Swiss exile, and finally those who questioned the involvement of an artist in political matters at all.

The reception of *Au-dessus de la mêlée* has been discussed in detail in Chapter II of this study. The collection of essays was for the most part considered well-meaning but biased and disappointing. This view was confirmed post-war by Edith von Teren in the *Pester Lloyd*: "Auch in Deutschland enttäuschte das Buch. Man hatte vom Schöpfer des *Jean-Christophe* mehr Objektivität erwartet."⁵⁷ Significantly none of Rolland's admirers, not even Stefan Zweig, felt the need to translate the work. It is perhaps a sign that they were not at all confident of securing a positive reception for the essays in Germany. Indeed there is much to suggest that to disseminate them post-war would probably have done more to undermine Romain Rolland's reputation than bolster it.

The collection of essays gathered under the title of *Les Précurseurs*, however, was quickly translated. For the most part these essays received very positive reviews and were felt to demonstrate Rolland's unerring independence of spirit and his courageous defence of the common man of all nations. Joseph Chapiro had a particular word of praise for the article "Aux peuples assassinés" in the *Berliner Tageblatt* in January 1920:

Als er sagte: "Ich leide", da litten wir alle mit ihm, und als die Völker noch für unklare Gedanken bluteten - unselige Märtyrer, die zu Helden geschlagen wurden! - da hat Rolland seinen Fluch gegen die Regierungen geschleudert in jenem wunderbaren Artikel "An die

hingeschlachteten Völker", der ein wilder Anklageschrei der gemarterten Menschheit war.⁵⁸

Whilst many freely acknowledged Rolland's admirable intentions, numerous too were those who underlined his isolation and impotence to change events in the free world. Jakob Schaffner felt the need to put Rolland's efforts into a realistic global context. Writing in *Das neue Buch* in March 1920, Schaffner questioned the influence of this most democratic and humanist of writers on the War itself:

Ich spreche von Wirkung! Daß sich ihm ein Strudel von Intellektuellen aus mehreren Ländern, sonderlich aus Deutschland, angeschlossen hat, ist keine Wirkung. Der Weltkrieg ging seinen Gang.⁵⁹

Friedrich von Oppeln-Bronikowski used even harsher words in the *Deutsche Rundschau* to characterise what he saw as Rolland's impotence and isolation from political reality: "Heute wirken seine Mahnungen nur noch als das vergebliche Wagnis eines Schwärmers, der über die gekreuzten Waffen hin die Geister zu Brüderlichkeit aufrufen wollte."⁶⁰ To Oppeln-Bronikowski, Rolland's role appeared to be that of a dreamer who laboured under the illusion that it was possible to banish the elemental savagery of war with a few magic formulae: "Seine eigne Pazifizistenrolle aber wird die rührende Geste eines Schwärmers bleiben, der die wütenden Wogen elementarer Ereignisse mit einem Zauberwort bannen will."⁶¹ This label of dreamer came from many quarters. It was used to demonstrate that Romain Rolland was hopelessly out of touch with the reality of Franco-German relations. One individual demanding reconciliation did not represent the French people, who were seen to harbour something less than reconciliatory attitudes towards Germany. The composer Max Bruch of the Akademie der Künste warned his countrymen not to equate the idealism of this dreamer with the true political ambitions of France:

Es bedarf wohl kaum der Versicherung, daß auch ich mich über eine entschiedene, dauernde Annäherung der Intellektuellen beider Länder

freuen würde. Aber ein einzelner wohlmeinender Schwärmer, wie Herr Rolland, *ist nicht Frankreich*, weder die Nation noch die Regierung steht hinter ihm.⁶²

With *Les Précurseurs*, Rolland also earned himself the reputation of being a communist sympathiser. He had dedicated this collection of essays to the "martyrs of a new faith": Jean Jaurès, Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, Kurt Eisner and Gustav Landauer. They were, stated Rolland, "victimes de la féroce bêtise et du mensonge meurtrier, libérateurs des hommes, qui les ont tués."⁶³ Not surprisingly, Rolland's support for the November Revolution brought a good deal of resentment in mainstream political and nationalist circles in Germany. Otto Grautoff stated his profound disapproval of Rolland's involvement with Wilhelm Herzog and the German Revolution. In his polemical critique *Die Maske und das Gesicht Frankreichs* published in 1923, Grautoff maintained that Rolland's downfall as an artist had come in 1914 with his entry into politics. This had encouraged him to take sides, ignoring the spirit of objectivity to which he paid such lip-service: "Er formulierte seine 'unparteiische' Meinung ohne überparteiliche Erleuchtung."⁶⁴ Nowhere was this more obvious, however, than in the support he gave to the German Revolution and its most prominent representatives. Grautoff alleged that without the slightest understanding of the background to the Revolution, receiving only one-sided information from Wilhelm Herzog, Rolland had denounced Ebert, Scheidemann and Noske and undermined Germany's attempts to become a democratic republic:

Die furchtbarste Enttäuschung aber hat Rolland seinen Freunden und Verehrern im Augenblick der deutschen Revolution bereitet [...]. In den furchtbaren Wintermonaten des Jahres 1919, in denen die junge deutsche Republik hart um ihre Existenz kämpfte, hat Rolland den moralischen Kredit Deutschlands in einer Artikelserie der *Humanité* untergraben.⁶⁵

After the Versailles treaty, many Germans expected Rolland to speak out in favour of a revision of the treaty and the establishment of a fairer peace for Germany. Yet after 1919, complained Grautoff, Rolland's contributions to

European peace had been sadly lacking, indeed, his one or two weak outbursts were followed by a conspicuous lapse into silence:

Einige matte, ganz allgemeine Aufrufe zur Völkerverständigung, einige schwache, bloß formulierte Proteste gegen französische Vergewaltigungsmethoden. Das ist alles, dann zog Rolland sich aus der politischen Arena zurück.⁶⁶

Perhaps more surprising than this reception in nationalist circles is that many of the French writer's liberal German critics also felt uncomfortable with the political direction Rolland was taking. They preferred to pass over his support for left-wing politics with little or no comment. The dedication to Lieb knecht and his fellow revolutionaries is, for example, not mentioned at all by Stefan Zweig in his section on *Les Précurseurs* in *Der Mann und das Werk*. Neither is there much to indicate Rolland's growing political radicalisation throughout the Twenties, other than a very brief reference to Russia.⁶⁷

Both the content and influence of Romain Rolland's published wartime writings were thus questioned in certain quarters. Nor were all critics willing to accept other received wisdom about the French writer. Rolland's decision, for example, to remain in Switzerland at the outbreak of the War came under scrutiny. Klara Maria Faßbinder became one of those to ask uncomfortable questions about this. In her 1925 study of the Frenchman, Faßbinder admitted that her work inspired by a love of *Jean-Christophe* had, against her will, become something of a settlement of accounts:

Sie ist aus der Dankbarkeit gegen den Menschen und sein Werk entstanden, wurde aber unter der Hand und fast wider Willen zu einer persönlichen Abrechnung und Klärung. Die Spuren dieses Kampfes waren nicht zu tilgen, ohne die Arbeit selbst aufzuheben.⁶⁸

Whilst she sympathised with Rolland's desire to safeguard his intellectual freedom, she could not help believing that his self-imposed exile had proven to be a desperate mistake, not only for his reputation in France which had

suffered such appalling attacks, but most importantly for the quality of his writing per se. In spite of her sympathy for the integrity of the man, she felt that Rolland had effectively abandoned his country at a time of its most urgent need. The French were right to feel betrayed. For, what he gained in intellectual detachment, he very definitely lost in emotional understanding. He lacked empathy for the plight of all those people who abhorred the savagery and destruction of war, but who supported the war effort or who fought themselves out of a sense of love for and duty to their homeland. This led to an emotional chasm between Rolland and his readership that killed his power to reach out and move his audience. His ability to capture the heart of the reader had gone, Faßbinder argued, his experience of war being so different to that of his fellow countrymen. The resulting gulf was not be bridged:

Die tiefste Ursache der Entfremdung zwischen Rolland und seinem Volke liegt darin, daß er in der Stunde der höchsten Not, da im ganzen französischen Volk die Gewißheit unerschütterlich lebendig war, daß es um Sein oder Nichtsein als Nation ging, sich von ihm geschieden, daß er diese Stunden freiwillig fern von ihm verlebte und daß dadurch der Gefühlsinhalt, der sich für ihn mit den Erlebnissen des Krieges verbindet, wesentlich verschieden ist von dem seiner Zeitgenossen. Über diese Kluft hinwegzukommen, ist schwer, fast unmöglich. Wer sollte dies nicht verstehen?⁶⁹

Faßbinder concluded that the price of Rolland's intellectual independence had been too high, for it had crippled him creatively. In order to serve the European ideal, he had lost his homeland: "Um seiner Heimat Europa treu zu bleiben, verlor er die Heimat Frankreich."⁷⁰ She used an image first deployed by Stefan Zweig in *Der Mann und das Werk* to describe the situation in which Romain Rolland found himself post-war. Zweig had portrayed the Frenchman as living "in tragischer Absonderung,"⁷¹ spied upon by the authorities, hated in France: "ein Gefangener unsichtbarer Mächte, wohnt Romain Rolland im gläsernen Kerker."⁷² Whilst his Austrian biographer had emphasised the picture of a persecuted individual, martyred for his uncompromising defence of truth, Faßbinder interpreted Rolland's

isolation differently, maintaining that this terrible alienation was to some degree self-inflicted. It was precisely this distance, this alienation from life which had made itself felt in his writing:

Ein treffendes Bild! Es ist wie ein luftleerer Raum um ihn, in dem seine Stimme eigen fern und fremd klingt. Sie hat den Kontakt mit der lebendigen Welt verloren. Es konnte nicht ausbleiben, daß dies auch auf seine Dichtung von Einfluß wurde.⁷³

As an illustration of her point Faßbinder compared Rolland's *Clérambault* to *Le Feu* (1916) by Henri Barbusse. Both novels were essentially condemnations of the evils of war. Yet, she argued, Barbusse's work was much more effective not only as a literary piece but as a tool of anti-war propaganda. The reason for this lay in the question of experience. Barbusse had experienced combat and was therefore able to acknowledge the nobility of the fighting man, the sense of honour and duty which prevailed on both sides of the trenches. *Clérambault*, however, showed no understanding for the emotions of those touched by the War. Hence the novel remained schematic, psychologically weak and above all "seltsam blutleer."⁷⁴ Stylistically it offered no compensations for these failings.

Had Romain Rolland returned to France and been willing to risk prison for his convictions, Faßbinder believed, both his campaign and his later creative writing would have carried much more weight: "Daß er sich so der stärksten Waffe im Kampfe für seine Überzeugung beraubte, ist die tragische Wendung in seinem Leben und seinem Künstlertum!"⁷⁵ Faßbinder admitted to feeling a certain terror at attacking such a revered figure as Romain Rolland. Yet the more she pondered this matter and the question of the value of Rolland's post-war writings, the more this judgement pressed itself upon her.

Most noticeable in Rolland's decline as a writer was his use of language. Since the War, she argued, he had lost his way, his poetry subsumed by socio-political criticism, his talent suppressed by the need to analyse and philosophise. A sad consequence of this was his inability to engage the reader on a stylistic level at all. Rolland had destroyed one of the most

fundamental expectations of a work of literature: the enjoyment of language itself. The failure of Rolland's reputation in his native France was, Faßbinder argued, more directly related to this fact than to any lingering resentment of his wartime stance. For he had chosen to ignore the power and the beauty of language in a culture which prized these qualities so highly:

Dies Erblassen der Sprachkraft ist eines der Hauptzeichen der nachlassenden Künstlerkraft Rollands seit Kriegsbeginn - Antäus, der den mütterlichen Boden nicht mehr berührt. Daß dies in seinem Heimatlande, das ja über eine ganz andere Sprachkultur als wir verfügt, bei der Beurteilung von Rollands Werken besonders erschwerend ins Gewicht fällt, ist nicht erstaunlich, zumal nicht bei denen, die seine Überzeugungen nicht teilen.⁷⁶

Indeed, so politicised had Romain Rolland's reputation become that it was a surprise, Faßbinder wrote, to find him referred to in the annals of French literature at all.

Inevitably, Rolland did not meet with approval in many quarters in Germany for the manner in which his writings and his political interventions had become so intertwined and entangled. He was attacked on a number of occasions for intervening in the political domain, in which, it was felt by some, the poet proper had no place. After the publication of the *Déclaration de l'Indépendance de l'Esprit*, Richard Dehmel denounced the manifesto in an article published in *Das Tagebuch* on 28 February 1920, refusing to sign the statement which had gained the support of such internationally recognised figures as Alfred Einstein, Ivan Goll, Hermann Hesse, Käthe Kollwitz, Heinrich Mann and Fritz von Unruh in Germany, together with Alfred Fried and Stefan Zweig in Austria. He had a warning for Rolland about the dangers of intervening too directly in contemporary events: the concentration on the present would lead to obscurity. To preach was not the lot of the poet:

Auf die Zeitgenossen zwar wirken die Friedensprediger ebenso erfolgreich wie die Kriegsprediger, manchmal sogar erfolgreicher, aber ihre Wirkung auf die Nachwelt war bis jetzt gleich null, wie die

Weltgeschichte beweist; hätte Jesus nichts weiter getan als Frieden gelehrt, würde heute kein Hahn mehr nach ihm krähen.⁷⁷

Christ had not simply preached peace, his questioning of humanity had gone far deeper. To probe the most profound areas of human imagination and integrity, that was the true role of the artist. Romain Rolland, however, was more of a preacher in poet's clothing than a true artist: "Rolland ist ein Lehrer und Prediger dichterischer Verkappung; ich bin Dichter."⁷⁸

Walther Kückler, a more sympathetic observer, also spoke of Rolland as a writer who had been seduced against his better judgement into the political arena. Had Rolland been able to follow his early leanings and become a musician and composer, argued Kückler, he might have found fulfilment as an artist. His talent as a writer was, however, too limited to carry off the literary goals he had set himself: "Aber es scheint, als ob Rolland in wunderschönem Enthusiasmus mehr hatte auf sich nehmen wollen, als zu tragen er fähig war."⁷⁹ Propelled into the role of preacher against the evils of a corrupt society, he effectively abandoned art: "Rolland wurde statt eines Künstlers ein Kritiker von Kunst und Pseudokunst, ein Redner und ein zorniger Ankläger gegen eine unheilige Gesellschaft."⁸⁰ In intervening in 1914 Rolland made a tragic mistake; his voice was broken above the noise of the hate-filled European battlefield: "Schöner, tragischer Irrtum! [...] Wäre er doch Künstler geworden oder geblieben!"⁸¹

The image established by Stefan Zweig of Romain Rolland as an unerring champion of humanity was then not left to stand wholly unchallenged. What of Rolland's creative writing? Zweig clearly hoped that an understanding of the man would encourage an understanding of the artist. One could perhaps argue that the opposite was equally likely to occur: that a preoccupation with the man would obscure his art, confining him to fame within his lifetime. There are some indicators which suggest that this did indeed happen. In his 1921 essay entitled *Neues von und über Romain Rolland*, Ernst Robert Curtius acknowledged the contribution Stefan Zweig had made to an understanding of Rolland. He also recognised the essential limitation of the

work as a piece of literary criticism. For it chose, he wrote, to avoid a critical assessment of the Frenchman's creative writing:

Das Buch Stefan Zweigs ist ein Buch der Huldigung und des Bekenntnisses. Er sieht Rolland mit den Augen der jasagenden Liebe. [...] Aber zugleich ist damit gesagt, daß eine andere Form der Betrachtung möglich - und notwendig ist.⁸²

Important questions remained to be asked about the artistic value of Rolland's work, the relationship between strength of conviction and powers of creation, and ultimately about Rolland's place within a European literary context:

Es *müssen* die Fragen gestellt werden, die Stefan Zweig, aus der menschlichen und künstlerischen Konzeption seines Werkes heraus, ausschalten mußte: was ist das künstlerische Gewicht des Rollandschen Werkes? Wie steht es um das Gleichgewicht zwischen Gesinnung und Gestaltung? Wie reiht sich Rolland in die Geschichtswelt und den Formenkreis des europäischen Geistes ein?⁸³

It is clear from *Der Mann und das Werk* that Zweig had chosen not to confront the question of literary worth head on. Yet, in spite of his praise for the integrity of the man, it would seem that nagging doubts existed even in the mind of such a 'disciple' as Stefan Zweig about the ultimate value of Rolland's creative writings. It is clear from Zweig's biography that he felt far more at home with the man than the writer. He regarded *Colas Breugnon* as Rolland's artistically most accomplished work. This "French intermezzo of Rolland's European symphony"⁸⁴ brought the writer closest to France and French thought, argued Zweig, closest also to his most loved medium of music:

Künstlerisch ist *Colas Breugnon* vielleicht Rollands gelungenstes Werk. Eben weil er aus einem Gusse ist und, hinfließend in einem einzigen Rhythmus, sich nirgends an Problemen staut [...]. Nie war Rolland dem reinen Dichter in sich näher als in diesem Werk, wo er ganz Franzose ist.⁸⁵

When Zweig turns to *Jean-Christophe* there is a certain unease in the discussion of the novel as a work of art. In a Tolstoian sense, he argued, *Jean-Christophe* is not really art at all, but an act, a moral statement: "nur Durchgang zu ethischer Wirkung, und im Sinne Tolstois will sein *Johann-Christof* kein literarisches Werk sein, sondern eine Tat."⁸⁶ One senses that the Austrian author did not speak with full confidence of Rolland's literary talents. His comments are sometimes guarded and on occasion appear, implicitly, surprisingly uncomplimentary. Rolland, wrote Zweig, was not a story-teller, did not have a distinctive style and was not really a poet at all, but a musician:

Rolland ist kein Erzähler und auch nicht das, was man einen Dichter nennt: er ist Musiker und verwebt alles in Harmonie [...]. Rolland hat auch gar nicht das als Erzähler, was man einen Stil nennt.⁸⁷

We note here the parallels with those French critics who denied Rolland 'style'. Rolland, averred Zweig, wrote beautifully when fired by musical inspiration, and could then be counted among the finest of literary craftsmen. However, in those numerous sections of the novel where the historian and polemicist take over, the beauty and polish disappear:

Wo Rolland aus musikalischer Inspiration schafft, zählt er unter die größten Künstler der Sprache. Daneben gibt es freilich wieder Stellen, wo der Historiker, der Zeitkritiker spricht: da löscht plötzlich jener Glanz aus, sie wirken wie kalte Rezitative in einem musikalischen Drama.⁸⁸

This demonstrated to Zweig the constant battle within Rolland between the historian and the musician, scholar and artist: "Der uralte Zwist zwischen dem Musiker und dem Historiker ist in diesem Werke noch zu spüren."⁸⁹

Interesting too were Zweig's comments about the relationship between Romain Rolland and his two main protagonists in the novel. *Jean-Christophe*, he wrote, was not so much a self-portrait, but a sublimation of all the greatest figures of musical history. It was Olivier to whom Rolland

was most closely related: "in vielen Zügen ein Selbstporträt ... nicht so sehr des Schicksals als der menschlichen Wesenheit Romain Rollands."⁹⁰ Jean-Christophe meanwhile represented the character Rolland himself longed to be. He was an incarnation of the creative will, energy and power which his gentle creator so craved:

Johann Christof war nur ein Traum, die Sehnsucht des Sanften nach der Kraft: und diesen Traum seiner Jugend hat Olivier-Rolland selbst gestaltet, indes er sein eigenes Bild hinlöschte von der Tafel des Lebens.⁹¹

Whilst one acknowledges Zweig's poetic licence here, this quotation is in essence a rather unflattering one, reducing the Romain Rolland of pre-*Jean-Christophe* days by implication to the ranks of the weak and mediocre. It was only at the outset of War, Zweig argued, that the strength of conviction and iron will exhibited by the fictional character of Jean-Christophe was resurrected in Rolland. We recall: "Johann Christof hatte seinen Sarg gesprengt und war auferstanden in der Gestalt seines Dichters."⁹² 'Olivier Rolland' was dead, re-born in the image of Jean-Christophe. Inspired by his creation Rolland stood alone against the world in his mission of love, indifferent to the hatred and scorn his position attracted from all sides, just as Jean-Christophe:

Wer einen Johann Christof das Evangelium eines freien Gewissens sprechen ließ, darf sich nicht verleugnen, wenn die Welt ihm das Kreuz bereitet hat, er muß das Apostolat auf sich nehmen und gegebenenfalls das Märtyrertum.⁹³

German critics now tended to share this conviction that the character of Jean-Christophe was more of a "Wunschbild" than autobiography, Olivier being seen as the character who most closely represented the author's ego. Hence they argued, Olivier and not Jean-Christophe would have made the most credible main protagonist. For Josef Hofmiller, writing in the *Süddeutsche Monatshefte* in May 1919, Rolland's gravest artistic error had been to choose a German hero. It had engendered an unnatural tension in the work:

Als Franzose zum Helden eines Werkes von solcher Bedeutung einen Deutschen zu wählen, war ein Wagestück, das vor Rolland noch niemand versucht hat und das auch ihm nicht gelingen *konnte*... Olivier ist Rolland, nicht Johann Christof. Aber Johann Christof trägt das Werk, nicht Olivier. Das verursacht eine innere Stillosigkeit.⁹⁴

This choice turned *Jean-Christophe* into a work of scholarship rather than the product of artistic imagination and intuition. It meant that Rolland was forced to rely heavily on the lives of great German musicians for the basis of his character. The intermingling of different personalities and epochs robbed the work of a sense of unity and integrity. This point was not new.⁹⁵ However, Hofmiller gave the observation a different slant here.

It was the choice of a German hero that led Rolland to commit an irredeemable artistic error. Being unable to identify fully with his main protagonist, the author had been forced to compose *Jean-Christophe* as a third person narrative, assuming the stance of omniscient narrator. For Hofmiller the only acceptable form of the "Entwicklungsroman" was the first person narrative. The epic story of the development of a single, exceptional individual from birth to the grave required, in his estimation, the intimacy of the first person: "Eine Entwicklungsgeschichte dieser Art läßt sich technisch nur als Ich-Roman bewältigen."⁹⁶ *Der grüne Heinrich* and *Wilhelm Meister* would have been unthinkable, he contested, as third person narratives. *Jean-Christophe*'s unevenness and many inadequacies all stemmed from this fundamental error:

Die Ich-Form war Rolland aus persönlichen Gründen unmöglich. Mit der Er-Form war aber eine Geschichte von solcher Anlage aus technischen Gründen nur halb zu bewältigen. Wer das Problem durchdenkt, kommt dahinter, daß all die Schiefheiten und Meinungsverschiedenheiten der Kritik, die Rollands Werk veranlaßt hat, aus mangelhafter Erkenntnis seiner primären Mißgriffe stammen.⁹⁷

It was not a matter of whether Rolland had portrayed this or that aspect of German life and letters in a fair manner, or whether the Frenchman had betrayed nationalistic or cosmopolitan tendencies in any given episode of *Jean-Christophe*. The most basic question concerned the literary merit of the work and that had been all too readily ignored. Earlier critics did not seem to realise, wrote Hofmiller, that the novel could never hope to succeed as a work of art because Rolland had written an epic, requiring the first person narrative, from the stance of the omniscient narrator:

Worum es sich handelt, ist einzig und allein: ist sein Buch ein Ganzes, ein wohlgeratenes Kunstwerk? Auf diese Frage muß ein Leser, der nicht als Kulturmissionär oder vergleichender Völkerpsychologe oder weiß Gott was sonst noch an das Buch herantritt, sagen: Nein, das ist es nicht. Und zwar deshalb nicht, weil die Geschichte überhaupt nicht zu bezwingen war, auch nicht von einem stärkeren Künstler als Rolland.⁹⁸

The question of *Jean-Christophe*'s unevenness was reawakened in a number of quarters. In spite of the sympathy that the novel continued to attract - even Josef Hofmiller felt he could still recommend the work to a German readership as an "ungewöhnlich lesenswertes Buch"⁹⁹ - it enjoyed an enduring reputation in Germany as a great work, rather than a great work of art. When Luise Kraucher returned to the question of artistic merit in the *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* in 1931, the same consensus continued to emerge: however engaging *Jean-Christophe* might be on so many levels, as a work of art, it was only partly satisfactory. Kraucher identified volumes IV, V and VII for particular criticism, arguing that they transgressed the boundaries of literature:

Meine Untersuchung unterschied im wesentlichen drei unkünstlerische von sieben dichterischen Büchern. Nicht allein, daß diese die überwiegende Mehrzahl darstellen, ist es vor allem die hohe Sprachkunst, die Rolland zum Dichter stempelt. Um so schmerzlicher aber ist die Erkenntnis, daß dieses große Werk, von einem großen Künstler geschaffen nicht einheitlich ist, daß Tendenzwerte das Kunstwerk beeinträchtigen.¹⁰⁰

In spite of its many qualities, the novel often did not satisfy her demand for "Ordnung, Einheit und Klarheit."¹⁰¹ There was too much action on the periphery of the work, too many disparate characters who detracted from the sense of unity and order, too many dialogues written in the present tense when the epic novel most naturally demanded the imperfect descriptive tense, too much analytical rather than poetic vocabulary. For, Kraucher argued, a work of art had essentially to be an emotional, not an intellectual experience. This is what she missed in many episodes of *Jean-Christophe*, the engagement of the heart rather than the head: "Die Polemik ... schafft mehr ein reines Intellekts- als ein Gefühls- d.h. Kunsterlebnis."¹⁰² In order to engage the feelings, a very careful use of language and evocative vocabulary was necessary. "Dichtung ist Wortkunst, Kunst mit den Mitteln der Sprache,"¹⁰³ and Rolland often chose to ignore this fact to his detriment.

The moral value of a work, Kraucher argued, could never compensate for aesthetic weakness: "Die ethischen Werte vermögen in einem Kunstwerk keinesfalls die ästhetischen zu ersetzen, wenn wir dem Autor auch dafür moralische Bewunderung zollen müssen."¹⁰⁴ Her point is quite clear here, however much admiration an author might command for his own integrity, it could not make him immune from aesthetic investigation and judgement. This is particularly relevant in the discussion of Romain Rolland. Rolland's reputation as a man of great integrity made many a critic uncomfortable in approaching his writing from a solely literary perspective. Auguste Hauschner freely admitted to this difficulty when reviewing *Colas Breugnon* for *Das literarische Echo* in 1920. She could not, she wrote, separate Rolland's humanity from his work:

Ich gestehe: einer Schöpfung Romain Rollands komme ich nicht voraussetzungslos entgegen. Menschtum und Künstlerschaft kann ich bei ihm nicht auseinanderhalten, kann nie vergessen, daß er, während der Folterzeit des Krieges, einer der auserwählten Brüderlichen war, die Liebe nicht nur predigten, sondern auch unermüdet persönlich übten.¹⁰⁵

Many found the moral and intellectual content of his writing inseparable from aesthetic concerns. Rolland was a moralist and an artist, wrote Otto and Erna Grautoff in 1926:

Idee und Dichtung sind in ihm eins. Er dichtet seine Weltverbesserungspläne, und er moralisiert seine Dichtungen. In seinen Manifesten bleibt er Künstler und in seinen epischen Werken Moralist.¹⁰⁶

Indeed, they argued, it was in attempting to force him into any single conceptual category that one left Rolland open to attack: "Will man ihn für eine Begriffskategorie in Anspruch nehmen, so gibt man ihn den Angriffen der Begriffspalter preis."¹⁰⁷

Rolland's German critics agreed in the main that this didacticism became ever more apparent in his post-war writings. Ludwig Hatvany identified this same strong tendency to moralise in Rolland's *Clérambault*. It was as if the author had sought to crush the sense of artistry within his novel, in order to allow his didactic leanings free rein:

Doch der Künstler Rolland hat nicht die Kraft, oder vielmehr es hat der Mensch Rolland nicht den Willen dazu, um rein als Dichter dichterisch vorzugehen. Er opfert das Artistische dem Didaktischen. Sein Buch ist ein Mittelding zwischen Kritik und Dichtung.¹⁰⁸

Romain Rolland's moral thrust was given a mixed reception by the critics. There were those who wholeheartedly approved it. It was in particular those on the left of the political spectrum who applauded Rolland's own growing radicalism. Heinz Liepmann greeted Rolland's status as preacher and social conscience in the Social Democratic *Vorwärts* in 1926: "Er ist ein Prediger des sozialen Geistes in der Realität und in der Idee - ein Prediger, dessen Rede einer Form gehorcht, die wertvoller ist als die literarische: die persönliche."¹⁰⁹ Left-wing critics admired what they saw as Rolland's conversion from liberal intellectual to an ally of communist ideals. Peter Flamm welcomed the popular edition of Rolland's work published by Rütten

& Loening in a review for the *Deutsch-Französische Rundschau* in July 1931. It would, he argued, liberate Rolland from the grasp of the bourgeoisie who had only read the French writer out of a sense of duty. Now the German people would have the chance to learn Rolland's great message, the need for the mutual understanding of peoples:

Rolland gehört zum deutschen Bildungsgut, die bürgerliche Gesellschaft hat ihn gelesen, weil es zur "Bildung" gehörte, Rolland gelesen zu haben. Inzwischen hat der Snobismus abgewirtschaftet; dieser Europäer Romain Rolland ist nicht mehr Angelegenheit einer bestimmten Klasse von Menschen, sondern Sache des Volkes und der Völker. Denen er mit seinem Wesen, seinem Werk und seiner Einstellung den einzig zu gehenden Weg weist; den gegenseitiger Durchdringung.¹¹⁰

The tone of this quotation is characteristic of left-wing criticism which sought to claim Rolland from the grasp of the bourgeoisie, as property of the people. Communist and left-wing critics of the Weimar era and beyond praised the manner in which Rolland used moral and political didacticism in his creative writing as essential to the post-war world. The War was seen to have politicised every aspect of modern life and the left in Germany acknowledged with great sympathy the commitment Rolland was willing to bring to the cause of the common man: "*Das ist es, was wir brauchen*," wrote Helene Stöcker, "*diese Einheit von politischer Überzeugung und Leben, die Einheit von Politik und Moral*."¹¹¹

Hence they followed with interest the debate which took place between that other great literary hero of the left, Henri Barbusse and Romain Rolland on the question of the use of revolutionary violence. Barbusse argued that violence was on occasion necessary and morally justifiable, whilst Rolland opposed any attempt to legitimise its use.¹¹² In 1923 Arnold Gysin dedicated a tract to resolving the conflict between these grand men of the European intelligentsia in *Die andere Hälfte der Pflicht*. Gysin lamented the fact that they, although opponents of imperialism and capitalist exploitation, were publicly so at odds with one another. His introduction to Rolland and

Barbusse is a good indicator of the esteem that these men commanded amongst the Left in Weimar Germany:

Beide Männer sind entschiedene Gegner des heutigen Systems der Ausbeutung, des Imperialismus und der geistigen Knechtung. Ihr Name ist den Hütern dieser Ordnung verhaßt. Beide haben seit Jahren protestiert gegen den Weltkrieg und haben mit ihrem Rufe die Massen aufgerüttelt.¹¹³

As the threat of fascism grew ever more menacing, Rolland and Barbusse did indeed bury their differences in order to co-ordinate their efforts for European freedom and peace. They wished to see all anti-fascist, anti-war elements form a powerful mass movement. Hence they collaborated in the organisation of the International Congress of Amsterdam Against War and Fascism in August 1932, which was an attempt to forge a coalition between workers and intellectuals. Rolland's evolution in the 1920's from bourgeois individualist and intellectual to one more closely aligned with the Communist International and the organised proletariat won him friends on the left. It was to some degree inevitable that he would alienate his politically mainstream sympathisers.

Outside the sphere of committed left-wing politics, the majority of mainstream literary commentators observed this development with scepticism. They preferred to keep alive the image of the individualist and moralist and therefore tended to ignore Rolland's new-found radicalism to concentrate on past deeds as a peacemaker. From a literary critical perspective, most of his 'bourgeois' critics did feel that art and didacticism, moral or political, made uncomfortable bedfellows and the later works were given a lukewarm reception for that reason. Rolland had nonetheless amassed a substantial bedrock of sympathy in liberal circles in Germany which often rescued his creative writing from the critical drubbing it might otherwise have received. Rolland's inter-war writing did not so much build upon his literary reputation as live off the political credit he had accumulated as an anti-war campaigner. Many were the critics who expressed their misgivings about a particular work, whilst acknowledging their admiration

and gratitude to the man. They wrote with Rolland's legendary reputation in mind. This was stated very clearly for us by one critic in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1926:

Man wird in der Erkenntnis bestätigt, daß die eigentliche Größe und die Weltgeltung Rollands weniger im einzelnen Dichtwerk beschlossen liegen, als im Abglanz der Legende seines heroischen Künstler-Menschentums, seiner Geistigkeit und heroischen Lebensführung.¹¹⁴

Romain Rolland's post-1914 fiction was hence reviewed with the respect that the author was felt to deserve. The underlying feeling of disappointment could often not be disguised, however, that the later works demonstrated a weakening of Rolland's talent as a writer. Eva Martens spoke in the *Stuttgarter Neues Tageblatt* in 1926 of Rolland's second *roman fleuve*, *L'âme enchantée*: "Wir folgen dem Dichter auch auf den Wegen, die er in *Annette et Sylvia* einschlägt, wenn wir auch leise und etwas schmerzlich ein Sinken seiner Schöpferkraft darin zu verspüren glauben."¹¹⁵ Reviewers would preface any negative commentary with a statement of respect for the man, sometimes however with distinctly unflattering undertones. A contributor to *Das Tagebuch*, who preferred to be known only by his initials, again commented on *Annette et Sylvia*:

Bei allem Respekt vor diesem Dichter, der eben doch mehr Dozent für Moral und Menschenglück, als Dichter im eigentlichen Sinne ist, bei allem Respekt also: dieser Roman kippt ganz auf die Seite [...], die Kapitel verlieren sich in ein Analysieren, in ein Begründen, vielleicht damit den offen geäußerten Eindruck erhärtend, daß unendlich viel Deutsches in diesem Franzosen stecke.¹¹⁶

Significantly, the same artistic errors as those identified in *Jean-Christophe* were brought to the fore in this new novel: the predominance of philosophical and social commentary, the sense that the main protagonist, this time a woman, was again more of an intellectual construct than a character who sprang from intuitive understanding. Maria Beermann highlighted what she saw as the failure of the novel in Rolland's narrative stance. Just as Hofmiller had argued in the case of *Jean-Christophe*, Beerman believed that

the author's organising hand was all too visible in *L'âme enchantée*: "dem Verfasser gelingt es nicht, uns das Konstruktive des ganzen psychologischen Aufbaus zu verschleiern, und da liegt der ästhetische Mangel des ganzen Werkes."¹¹⁷ The work did not seem to have the necessary redeeming features that still guaranteed *Jean-Christophe* its audience.

If the critics were generally not enraptured by *L'âme enchantée*, what of the reading public? Johannes Fischer predicted in *Der Gral* in June 1924 that this was not a work designed to capture a mass readership.¹¹⁸ From the columns of *Das Tagebuch*, for example, it is possible to gain an insight into the most popular books being bought in the inter-war years. In an annual feature entitled "Welche Bücher werden am meisten verkauft," Romain Rolland's *Annette et Sylvia* is cited in December 1924 by six of the fifteen booksellers questioned as being amongst their best-sellers.¹¹⁹ A review of subsequent years of *Das Tagebuch* reveals that further volumes of the novel did not receive the same interest. May one conclude that the reading public, spurred on by Rolland's reputation, eagerly bought the first volume of this second *roman fleuve*, only to abandon it part way through publication? The reasons for this must remain speculative. However, the German public's appetite for Rolland's novels was on the wane.

Stefan Zweig was himself guarded in his welcome to the first volume of *L'âme enchantée* in 1924 finding it, in an article written for the American journal *The Dial*, to be lacking in that "richness of characterisation which gives his other novels their sea roar, their current and fullness, their symphonies."¹²⁰ In fact, Zweig wrote to Rolland in February 1924 about his concerns for the novel.¹²¹ He pointed out what he saw as the danger of attempting to write an epic novel in which the heroine's major struggles are very largely of a psychological nature. He wished to see this "sister of Jean-Christophe" propelled into the world in order to fight more battles, against more dangerous adversaries than she had hitherto been allowed to encounter. Furthermore, Zweig regretted that Rolland had condemned Annette, apart from one very brief affair, to celibacy. He found it incomprehensible that a woman of such deep feeling should not be prey to physical passion. Perhaps

this lack of love interest had also contributed to a cooling of the reading public's commitment to the work!

The absence of erotic interest in Rolland's writing had been highlighted earlier by Zweig in *Der Mann und das Werk* in his discussion of Rolland's pre-war theatrical cycles, the *Tragédies de la Foi*, and the *Théâtre de la Révolution*. These dramas had proved to be theatrical flops in France, some running for only one night, most unperformed. However, wrote Zweig, they were not dramas in a conventional sense at all, but "Denkspiele" flowing "nicht vom Gefühle aus und nicht vom Menschen, sondern vom Geiste und von den Ideen aus."¹²² The characters themselves lacked a human dimension; they were "mehr Formulierungen als Charaktere."¹²³ Yet, this fact alone should not have automatically condemned the plays to failure. Had not the highly successful "Denkspiele" of Ibsen and Strindberg reaped the rewards of stage popularity using essentially similar techniques? In Zweig's view, it was not the dramatic style or technique which singled out the box office success from the commercial flop, but the choice of subject matter. For both Ibsen and Strindberg had dealt with the erotic, had investigated and exposed the nature of the male-female relationship. Rolland's plays however were wholly unerotic; indeed in *Les Loups*, there is not one female presence on stage. His subject matter was the realm of politics and public morality. That fact alone, argued Zweig, had condemned Rolland to failure:

Die Problematik der Stücke Rollands war aber vor allem Anfang an verurteilt, bei einem bürgerlichen Publikum Gleichgültigkeit zu finden, weil sie eine politische, eine ideelle, eine heroische, eine revolutionäre Problematik war [...] das Theater Romain Rollands ist - und das bleibt immer tödlich bei modernem Publikum - ein unerotisches.¹²⁴

These dramas were written more for Weimar Germany than for the France of the early 1900's, argued Zweig in 1920. His predictions proved to be correct. The conflicts of real-life political revolutionaries such as Kerensky, Lenin and Liebknecht, foreseen and depicted by Rolland a generation earlier, struck a chord in Weimar Germany where they experienced a notable renaissance. It may surprise us now that Rolland became one of the most

performed French playwrights on the German-speaking stage in the 1920's. His plays, in particular those of the revolutionary cycle *Théâtre de la Révolution*, enjoyed over 120 first nights in that decade.¹²⁵ Within the confines of this present study, it will not be possible to do justice to the critical reception of these performances. However, it is proposed to highlight those aspects which allow us to form a more complete picture of Rolland's critical fate.

As we have seen, Rolland was lionised by the left, and Max Reinhardt, committed socialist, directed a highly successful performance of *Danton* which had its world premiere on 14 February 1920 in the Großes Schauspielhaus in Berlin. Willi Handl, who reviewed the performance for *Der Tag*, spoke of the great emotion aroused by the work and its interpretation amongst the audience:

Gedränge von lebenden, stoßenden Leibern ringsumher, Rufe von hoch herunter, Antwort aus der Tiefe hinauf, sprunghaftes Ansteigen zum vielstimmigen Schrei, Wellen der aufgepeitschten Bewegung, die durcheinander wirbeln und übereinander hinschlagen, Einbruch der rasenden Menge, fürchterliche Stille, dumpfes Verebben. Das ist, als wechselndes Bild und als Eindruck des Gehörs, von einer wuchtigen Größe, die bisher nicht erreicht worden war. Mitten im Spiel löste sich oft die Erregung und Begeisterung der Zuschauer in plötzlichen Ausbrüchen stärksten Beifalls.¹²⁶

Reinhardt's spectacular performances were widely acclaimed. "Reinhardts Aufführung des *Danton* im Großen Schauspielhaus," wrote Martin Borrmann in 1926, "wird in die Geschichte des deutschen Theaterlebens eingehen."¹²⁷ Indeed Germany's great theatrical director signed a contract with Warner Brothers on 31 March 1936 to film *Danton* for the screen. The project was never completed.¹²⁸

Rolland's revolutionary plays were greeted with tremendous enthusiasm in left-wing circles in the wake of the failed German uprising. *Danton* became part of an evening designed to celebrate the merger of the USDAP with the

KPD on 3 December 1920. The programme for this "Kunst-und Propaganda-Abend" read as follows: "1) Rezitation; 2) Männerchor; Russischer Rotgardistenmarsch!; 3) *Danton*, Revolutionsdrama in drei Akten von Romain Rolland - Regie: Max Reinhardt!; 4) Propagandateil: Rezitation; 5) Massengesang: Die Internationale."¹²⁹ It was this closeness with the radical Left that made many of Rolland's bourgeois critics feel so uncomfortable. His adoption by the communist Left in Germany was to be taken up ever more closely during the 1930's, not so much as a literary figure, but as a symbol of resistance to Nazism. All concerns of artistic merit were superseded at that point, needless to say, by questions of political pertinence.

General acknowledgements of the affectionate reception given to Rolland's plays by German audiences were numerous. Even negative reviews testified to the warmth and enthusiasm of the spectators.¹³⁰ However, the murmurings of dissatisfaction concerning the artistic value of Rolland's dramas continued to be heard amongst many established reviewers and the same critical strategy persisted: to recognise the greatness of the man whilst regretting his weakness as an artist. They lamented a lack of dramatic power, a thinness of characterisation, a preponderance of noble words which did not engage the emotions. Monty Jacobs described the premiere of *Danton* in the *Vossische Zeitung* as "dieses Schauspiel des tapferen Menschen und schwachen Dramatikers Romain Rolland."¹³¹ Siegfried Jacobsohn for *Die Weltbühne* advised the German theatregoer not to attempt a comparison between Rolland's *Danton* and Georg Büchner's drama of the same name, for fear of disappointment: "Den Büchner lassen wir aus dem Spiel. 'Komet, der Flammenspeer...': nein, das ist Rolland nie gewesen."¹³² It was Rolland's personality, not his work which had earned him a place in world history: "Ohne seine Persönlichkeit wären wir in dem furchtbaren Lustrum der Weltgeschichte ärmer gewesen. Seine poetischen Werke dagegen sind zu entbehren."¹³³

Romain Rolland's greatest theatrical success in Germany was to be a play written post-war. *Le Jeu de l'amour et de la mort* (1924) received its world premiere in Germany in the *Deutsches Schauspielhaus* in Hamburg on 18

February 1925. Rolland dedicated the play to Stefan Zweig whose encouragement had prompted the French author to complete the unfinished revolutionary cycle: "A l'esprit fidèle qui a le patriotisme de l'Europe et la religion de l'amitié à Stefan Zweig. Je dédie affectueusement ce drame, qui lui doit d'être écrit."¹³⁴ Interestingly, Rolland had made the concession to love necessary for popular success, of which Zweig had spoken. *Le jeu* takes as one of its central themes a love rivalry and the drama is generally acknowledged to be the most conventional play of the *Théâtre de la Revolution*.

It was premiered at over eighty German-speaking theatres in a period of less than five years and its great popularity with contemporary audiences was indisputable. This time Romain Rolland also seemed to have satisfied many of his inter-war critics. Julius Hart saw the drama as the most powerful of the revolutionary cycle: "Sein *Spiel vom Leben und Tod*, wohl das stärkste und inhaltreichste aus dem größeren Dramenzyklus [...] entwickelt sich in klaren, scharfen Antithesen."¹³⁵ Fritz Engel commented for the *Berliner Tageblatt* in February 1926 on a production of *Das Spiel von Tod und Liebe* in the capital. The accusations of lack of unity, harmony and beauty of language so often laid at Rolland's door had disappeared: "Das alles ist tadellos sauber und gut erzählt und aufeinandergeschichtet."¹³⁶ Similar praise came from Hanns Martin Elster for the *Tägliche Rundschau*: "Im übrigen kann man Romain Rollands nachdenkliches, feines Werk nur mit Freude begrüßen."¹³⁷

Yet even here critical enthusiasm for *Das Spiel* was tempered in some quarters. This time the major fault was felt to lie in its "sentimentality". In March 1925 the theatrical correspondent for the *Münchener Zeitung* singled out for criticism what he perceived to be an exaggerated noblemindedness, an unrealistic generosity of spirit:

So geistvoll und leidenschaftlich solche Klage hier erhoben wird - sie ergreift nicht völlig; aus irgendeinem Winkel heraus bläst es sentimental, irgendwo kommt das Männliche zu kurz, und zwar gerade dann, wenn es sich in Opfersucht und Edelmüt überbietet.¹³⁸

"Edel" and "Edelmut" were words used to describe the tone of the drama on a number of occasions. Often, however, the portrait of nobility of spirit was felt to be unconvincing, on occasion even bordering on the embarrassing. The dramas of the Revolution had, according to one critic for *Die literarische Welt*, "manchmal einen peinlichen Schuß Edelmut zu viel."¹³⁹ The language was too stylised, too precious, too academic. Love was allowed to triumph in *Das Spiel*, wrote Alfred Polgar for *Die Weltbühne*, but it is a "trüber, ein akademischer Sieg, eingeläutet von Sterbeglocken."¹⁴⁰ Siegfried Jacobsohn again cloaked his own damning commentary in expressions of respect. The drama, he wrote, was the work of a "prosaischer Racine von geringerem Talent":¹⁴¹

Respekt, Ihr Herr'n und aufgeschaut! Aber mehr als Respekt wird man für den Dichter Romain Rolland nicht leicht hegen, nicht für den Epiker noch für den Dramatiker. Was er "Spiel" nennt, ist gar keins, sondern eine gebildete, hochsinnige, zartfühlende, durch und durch edelmütige Redeübung.¹⁴²

This chapter has highlighted critical attitudes to Romain Rolland outside that rather small and protected domain of the universities. Here his perceived weakness as a writer, as an artist, was handled with much less indulgence. Whilst still commanding a great deal of respect as a man, it is possible to see that Rolland's literary reputation was on the decline in the inter-war German-speaking world. A majority of his German critics shared the view that his humanity surpassed his artistry. Implicit in much of the criticism of the Weimar years was the sentiment which Felix Baumbach stated so clearly in 1926: "Romain Rollands Menschtum überragt sein Dichtertum."¹⁴³ He was taken to task for the unevenness of his *chef d'oeuvre*, *Jean-Christophe*, for his tendency to philosophise and preach to the detriment of his creative writing. The experience of art, argued his critics, was essentially an engagement of the emotions not of the intellect, to which Rolland had primarily and unashamedly addressed himself in so much of his work. On those occasions when he seemed to write consciously to capture the emotions

of the reader/spectator, he was seen as overly sentimental, his portrait of spiritual nobility too remote from reality, too old-fashioned perhaps.

For a majority of these critics, however, it was impossible to separate the man from his reputation, which had indeed become legendary. After 1918, few and far between were reviews to deal with any piece of Rolland's creative writing without reference to his role in the First World War. Rolland's political stature overshadowed his literary presence. It was his name rather than the merit of a particular work that secured him an audience. The status that Rolland had acquired in the War became a calling card which guaranteed him admittance to the German publishing house and the stage. One of the few modern French authors welcome in Weimar Germany, staging one of his dramas or publishing one of his works became in itself an act of reconciliation in the "cold war" between France and Germany. His greatest work, however, lay in the conduct of his life. For many critics in Weimar Germany who had lived through the cataclysm of World War I, there was no greater honour. Romain Rolland was deemed to satisfy as much as any man might, Arthur Schopenhauer's maxim: "Das Höchste, was der Mensch erreichen kann, ist ein heroischer Lebenslauf."¹⁴⁴

Notes

- 1 Baumbach, Felix: "*Danton*". In: *Karlsruher Zeitung*, 25 October 1926.
- 2 Schopenhauer, Arthur. Quoted after: Stöcker, Helene: "Siehe ein Mensch!" In: *Die neue Generation*, vol XXII, no 2, February 1926, p 38. (Hereafter referred to as Stöcker).
- 3 See: *Un demi-siècle*, p 385 ff.
- 4 Dvorak, p vii.
- 5 Zweig, Stefan: *Tagebücher*. Gesammelte Werke in Einzelbänden, S Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1984, p 129. (Hereafter referred to as *Tagebücher*).
- 6 Ibid, p 150.
- 7 Zweig, Stefan: *Romain Rolland - Der Mann und das Werk*. Rütten & Loening, Frankfurt am Main 1926, third edition, Foreword. (Hereafter referred to as *Der Mann*).
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Nedeljkovic, Dragoljub-Dragan: *Romain Rolland und Stefan Zweig*. Editions Klincksieck, Paris 1970, p 7.
- 10 Ibid, p 8.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 *Der Mann*, p 39.
- 13 *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, vol VI, no 1. Quoted after: *Un demi-siècle*, p 109.
- 14 See: Motyljowa, Tamara: *Romain Rolland*. Aufbau-Verlag, Berlin and Weimar 1981, p 130.

15 *Cahier XI*, p 198ff.

16 Zweig, Stefan: *Das Herz Europas*. Zurich 1918, p 15.

17 Margaret Rogister recently highlighted this inaccuracy. Rogister, Margaret: "Romain Rolland: One German View." In: *The Modern Language Review*, vol LXXXVI, part 2, April 1991, pp 349 - 360.

18 *Ibid*, p 357.

19 Zweig: *Tagebücher*, p 43.

20 *Der Mann*, p 11.

21 *Ibid*, pp 45 - 46.

22 *Ibid*, p 48. Zweig's emphasis.

23 *Ibid*, p 190.

24 *Ibid*, p 230.

25 *Ibid*, p 231.

26 *Ibid*.

27 Zweig's sense of guilt is revealed again in: *Liber Amicorum Romain Rolland*, Zurich & Leipzig 1926, p 388. (Hereafter referred to as *Liber Amicorum*). "Jedesmal wenn ich ihm begegne, bin ich gleichzeitig beglückt und beschämt."

28 Williams, C E: *The Broken Eagle*, London 1974, p 115. (Hereafter referred to as *The Broken Eagle*).

29 *JAG*, p 63.

30 *The Broken Eagle*, p 119.

- 31 See: Zweig, Stefan: "Der Turm zu Babel." Cited after Williams, p 118. Zweig spoke of war as an inevitable phase of man's history, subject to divine predestination.
- 32 *Der Mann*, p 232.
- 33 Herzog, Wilhelm: "Vorwort zu Rollands *Tolstoi*." Reprinted in : *Das Forum*, vol VI, no 2, November 1921, p 52.
- 34 *Der Mann*, p 42.
- 35 Ibid, p 103.
- 36 *JAG*, p 271.
- 37 Ibid, p 426. Rolland's emphasis.
- 38 See: Cheval: *Romain Rolland*, p 297ff.
- 39 *Der Mann*, p 189.
- 40 Kersten, Kurt: "Rolland, Michelangelo." In: *Die neue Rundschau*, vol XXX, no 11, November 1919, col 1409.
- 41 Rothbarth, Margarete: "*Die Vorläufer*. Ein neues Buch Rollands." In: *Vorwärts*, 11 March 1920, p 2.
- 42 Nußbaum, Anna: "Romain Rolland und sein Gedanke." In: *Die neue freie Presse*, 16 January 1921.
- 43 Michel, Wilhelm: *Essays über Gustav Landauer, Romain Rolland, Friedrich Hölderlin*. Paul Steegemann Verlag, Hanover 1920, p 8.
- 44 Ibid, p 9. Michel's emphasis.
- 45 Chapiro, Joseph: "*Die Vorläufer*. Ein neues Buch von Romain Rolland." In: *Berliner Tageblatt*, 29 January 1920.
- 46 *Liber Amicorum*, p 327. We note the use of the word "Gewissen."

- 47 Ibid, p 152.
- 48 Ibid, p 259. Nicolai's emphasis.
- 49 E K: "*Liber Amicorum Romain Rolland*." In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 31 January 1926.
- 50 *Der Mann*, p 213.
- 51 *Liber Amicorum*, p 386.
- 52 *Der Mann*, p 34.
- 53 *Liber Amicorum*, p 388.
- 54 *Der Mann*, p 234.
- 55 *Liber Amicorum*, p 389.
- 56 *Der Mann*, p 189.
- 57 Von Teren, Edith: "Romain Rolland und Thomas Mann." In: *Pester Lloyd*, 2 February 1919, p 2.
- 58 Chapiro. See note 42.
- 59 Schaffner, Jakob: "Romain Rolland: Michelangelo." In: *Das neue Buch*, vol II, no 3, March 1920, p 1.
- 60 Von Oppeln-Bronikowski, Friedrich: "Romain Rolland." In: *Deutsche Rundschau*, vol XLVII, no 11, August 1921, p 240.
- 61 Ibid, p 241.
- 62 Bruch, Max. Letter published in: Nicolai G F: *Romain Rollands Manifeste und die deutschen Antworten*. Mundus Verlagsanstalt GmbH, Charlottenburg 1921, p 49. Bruch's emphasis.

- 63 *Les Précurseurs*, préface.
- 64 Grautoff, Otto: *Die Maske und das Gesicht Frankreichs*. Verlag Friedrich Andreas Perthes AG, Stuttgart/Gotha 1923, p 57.
- 65 Ibid, pp 57 - 58.
- 66 Ibid, p 58.
- 67 *Der Mann*, p 268.
- 68 Faßbinder, Klara Maria: *Romain Rolland*. Reimann & Co, Hamm (Westf.) 1925, p 11. (Hereafter referred to as Faßbinder). Faßbinder confessed her sense of guilt to Romain Rolland at expressing her sometimes negative thoughts in an unpublished letter of 18 January 1924 (FRR).
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- 70 Ibid, pp 41 - 42.
- 71 *Der Mann*, p 237.
- 72 Ibid, p 238.
- 73 Faßbinder, p 42.
- 74 Ibid, p 44.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid, p 52.
- 77 Dehmel, Richard: "Offener Brief an die Weltfriedensprediger." In: *Das Tagebuch*, vol I, no 8, 28 February 1920, p 280.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Küchler, Walther: "Romain Rollands Schicksalsgang." In: *Preußische Jahrbücher*, vol CXC, no 1, pp 29 - 30.

80 Ibid, p 30.

81 Ibid, p 34.

82 Curtius, E R: "Neues von und über Rolland." In: *Das Tagebuch*, vol II, 1921, p 819.

83 Ibid. Curtius's emphasis.

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85 Ibid, pp 184 - 185.

86 Ibid, p 130.

87 Ibid, pp 134 - 135.

88 Ibid, p 135.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid, p 134.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid, p 190.

93 Ibid, p 210.

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95 See p 175 of this study.

96 Hofmiller, p 136.

97 Ibid, p 139.

98 Ibid, p 141.

99 Ibid.

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110 Flamm, Peter: "Rolland fürs Volk!" In: *Deutsch-französische Rundschau*, vol IV, no 7, July 1931, p 608.

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113 Gysin, Arnold: *Die andere Hälfte der Pflicht*. Der neue Geist Verlag, Leipzig 1923, p 6.

- 114 Reiner, Otto: "Aert von Romain Rolland." In: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 4 February 1926.
- 115 Martens, Eva: "Dem Dichter des *Jean-Christophe*." In: *Stuttgarter Neues Tageblatt*, 28 January 1926.
- 116 K: "*Annette et Sylvia*." In: *Das Tagebuch*, vol V, no 29, 19 July 1924, p 1008.
- 117 Beermann, Maria: "*Verzauberte Seele*." In: *Die Bücherwelt*, vol XXV, no 1, January-February 1928, p 71.
- 118 Fischer, Johannes: "*Annette et Sylvia*." In: *Der Gral*, vol XVIII, no 9, June 1924, p 458.
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- 121 Unpublished letter of 8 February 1924. (FRR).
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129 "Kleine Mitteilungen." In: *Der Gral*, vol XV, nos 7/8, April 1921, p 375.

130 See, for example: Heilborn, Ernst: "Romain Rollands *Danton*." In: *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 19 February 1920.

131 Jacobs, Monty: "Romain Rollands *Danton*." In: *Vossische Zeitung*, 16 February 1920.

132 Jacobsohn, Siegfried: "*Danton*." In: *Die Weltbühne*, vol XVI, no 9, 26 February 1920, p 273.

133 Ibid.

134 Rolland, Romain: *Le jeu de l'amour et de la mort*. Albin Michel, Paris 1925, dédication.

135 Hart, Julius: "*Ein Spiel von Tod und Liebe*." In: *Der Tag*, 17 February 1926, p 2.

136 Engel, Fritz: "Romain Rolland: *Ein Spiel um Liebe und Tod*." In: *Berliner Tageblatt*, 16 February 1926, p 4.

137 Elster, Hanns Martin: "Romain Rolland: *Ein Spiel von Tod und Liebe*." In: *Tägliche Rundschau*, 17 February 1926, p 2.

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141 Jacobson, Siegfried: "*Spiel von Tod und Liebe*." In: *Die Weltbühne*, vol XXII, no 8, 23 February 1926, p 304.

142 Ibid.

143 See note 1.

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1933 - 1945

Chapter VII

GERMANY DIVIDED

Worin dann liegt die
Bedeutung des *Jean-Christof*?
Wir finden sie in der Frische
und Naivität des Herzens, die
sich ja nur die ganz Großen
zu bewahren wissen.¹

Any text, literary or political, can only survive if it is the subject of debate. That Germany was fascinated by the phenomenon of Romain Rolland is clear. His personality and his writings were the subject of hot contention between 1910 and 1933. After the *Machtergreifung* in January 1933, however, that precious freedom to debate swiftly disappeared. The tyranny which the German Nazi establishment then exercised over every aspect of the life of the nation has been all too well documented. They would have wished to count Rolland among their ideological supporters and some attempts were made to appropriate both Romain Rolland and *Jean-Christophe* as heroes of the Reich. Since Rolland could not be pacified and annexed by the Third Reich, however, he was ultimately to be relegated to obscurity within Germany; but there was another Germany to which he could and did turn and his name lived on in German-speaking exile publications.

After the events of January 1933 Rolland made a number of public statements condemning the new political landscape in Germany: "Contre le fascisme hitlérien" (2 March 1933); "Contre les bourreaux de l'Allemagne" (20 March 1933); "Contre l'abdication du parti social-démocrate allemand" (31 March 1933); "Contre l'antisémitisme en Allemagne" (5 April 1933); and "Contre le

racisme et l'antisémitisme" (9 April 1933).² He declared his unequivocal solidarity with all those in Germany who opposed Hitler: "la solidarité qui nous lie à tous ceux qui luttent contre le terrorisme déchaîné d'une réaction sans scrupules et sans frein."³ It was therefore unrealistic, one might have thought, for Germany's new leaders to expect anything short of total repudiation when attempting to court the French writer. Yet that they did. On 19 April 1933 the German consul in Geneva informed Rolland that *Reichspräsident* von Hindenburg wished to award him the Goethe Medal for Art and Science. Rolland refused this 'honour' in a letter of 20 April from a government which, he said, had provoked the disgust of the civilised world for its systematic destruction of the rights of its citizens and its programmatic onslaught on the Jewish people.⁴

Nevertheless, Rolland was again cited in the *Randnoten* of the *Kölnische Zeitung* of 9 May 1933 as a friend of Germany who had not ceased to attack the injustices to which she as a nation had been subjected. It was unfortunate that this friend now failed to show the same understanding for the new Germany: "Und gerade weil er diese Einsicht besaß, hätte er auch für die nationale Regierung in Deutschland Verständnis aufbringen müssen."⁵ Rolland replied in his second open letter to Germany in crisis and it was to cause no less controversy than his letter to Gerhart Hauptmann. The Germany that he loved, he informed the *Kölnische Zeitung*, was not Hitler's Germany but the Germany of her great *Weltbürger*. Just as in 1914, Rolland opposed Germany's great artists to the impoverishment of her political leaders:

Cette Allemagne-là est foulée aux pieds, ensanglantée et outragée par ses gouvernants 'nationaux' d'aujourd'hui, par l'Allemagne de la croix gammée, qui rejette de son sein les esprits libres, les Européens, les pacifistes, les israélites, les socialistes, les communistes, qui veulent fonder l'Internationale du Travail. - Comment ne voyez-vous pas que cette Allemagne 'nationale-fasciste' est la pire ennemie de la vraie Allemagne, - qu'elle la renie?⁶

Just as in 1914, Rolland provoked by his appeal an outcry in Germany. In his *Antwort eines Deutschen an die Welt*, Rudolf Binding rallied to the defence of his new political masters. The world, he said, had no understanding of the depths of humiliation to which Germany had been subjected. Hitler had returned to the German people a belief in themselves which had been taken from them at Versailles: "Die Welt hat nicht erlebt was wir erlebten. Noch ist das alles Beginn. Aber ein Volk glaubt an sich das nicht mehr an sich glaubte. Und sein Glaube macht es schön."⁷ In a further publication, *Sechs Bekenntnisse zum neuen Deutschland*, Binding, together with E.G. Kolbenheyer, the *Kölnische Zeitung*, Wilhelm von Scholz, Otto Wirz and Robert Fabre-Luce all came to the defence of the NSDAP. Romain Rolland was noticeably treated in all of these articles with a good deal of respect. His 'services' to Germany through *Jean-Christophe* and his support for a just peace were remembered fondly. "Alles das," wrote the editor of the *Kölnische Zeitung* on 20 May 1933, "werden wir nicht vergessen, und die Erinnerung daran führt uns auch jetzt die Feder."⁸ That respect, it was believed, made it all the more vital for Hitler's Germany to convince Rolland that the country was taking a true and honourable path. Indeed, the newspaper naively and tragically contended that its own existence as an independent organ constituted proof enough of Hitler's support for freedom of expression. Rolland had been duped by 'lies' about fascist terror. He could rest assured, however, that the country would do everything in its power to be understood by such an incorruptible personality as Romain Rolland:

Daß auch Ihr sonst so unbestechliches Urteil diesem Gerede zum Opfer gefallen ist, bedauern wir sehr, aber es spornt uns nur mehr dazu an, um ein besseres Verständnis bei Ihnen zu werben und weiter für die *Wahrheit* zu kämpfen.⁹

Hitler's Germany, however, was never able to convince Rolland that talk of fascist terror was mere gossip and after Rolland's active involvement with the International Committee of Enquiry into the Destruction of the *Reichstag*, the regime decided to prevent any further publications appearing in Germany. Political pressure was brought to bear on the Rotapfel-Verlag in Zurich to

stop *Der freie Geist*, a compilation of *Au-dessus de la Mêlée* and *Les Précurseurs*. The volume had already been printed in Rudolfstadt in Germany when the order came from the Ministry of the Interior in October 1933 to destroy it. The three final volumes of *L'Ame enchantée*, *L'Annonciatrice*, were also prevented from appearing. Since the regime could not convince Rolland of its own legitimacy, the only alternative was to silence him. Rolland himself took some pleasure in the report by Charles Vildrac that *Jean-Christophe* was one of the exhibits in the concentration camp at Oranienburg, exhibited as an example of degenerate literature alongside the works of Marx and Engels. His enemies were correct, he wrote, to identify him as an uncompromising opponent of fascist tyranny:

Les ennemis vous voient souvent plus à fond que les amis. Ce chef de camp, ce nazi fanatique, ne s'y est pas trompé: contre l'hitlérisme, contre tous les tyrans qui foulent aux pieds l'humanité et qui oppriment le peuple du travail, Jean-Christophe aura toujours le poing dressé.¹⁰

This was not, however, an official ban and the Nazi intelligentsia was more willing to abandon new writings than it was to abandon *Jean-Christophe*. Rolland was the subject of a doctoral thesis presented in 1935 and published two years later by Karl Großhans entitled *Romain Rolland und der germanische Geist*. It was a work 'inspired' by racial theories, *Rassenkunde*,¹¹ its basic thesis being to prove the closeness of Rolland to Germanic tradition. This was not new. As we have seen, from Hermann Bahr onwards it was the contention of a variety of German critics that Rolland bore many of the hallmarks of Germany's own great artists with some early critics even declaring him to be German. Großhans again began with the contention that one could only really understand Rolland by recognising his lineage, his blood ties. He used Friedrich Schiller to legitimise and support his methods, quoting from *Wallenstein* Act II, scene 3: "Hab ich des Menschen Kern erst untersucht, So weiß ich auch sein Wollen und sein Handeln."¹² Man's essence, his core was not to be found in an understanding of his individuality, his essential integrity, as is implied in the Schiller quotation however, it is to be found in an investigation of his racial heritage his "blutsmäßigen Bindung, seiner Erbanlage."¹³ Rolland was

considered a blood brother: "ein ausgeprägter Vertreter des nordischen Blutes."¹⁴ His appearance alone demonstrated his ties with the Aryan people, his blond hair, bright blue eyes and tall and slender stature. This Nazi critic took pains to insist, however, that appearance alone was not a decisive factor, probably because Hitler himself only fulfilled these criteria by virtue of his blue eyes. The most decisive characteristic lay in an attitude to life which Großhans described in the following mystical/romantic terms:

Was nennen wir germanisch? Germanisch heißt Ausfluß der Seele des nordischen Mythos, der Glaube an "den gestirnten Himmel über mir und das ewige Gesetz in mir"; germanisch, das ist höchste Sittlichkeit, tiefes Wissen um ein tragisches Schicksal und freudiges Bejahen und Erleben ewiger Wiedergeburt.¹⁵

Germanic, a term which the critic preferred to German, because it spoke more of the mythical past, was a description which was felt to encapsulate the moral virtues exhibited so forcefully by Rolland in his writing. It was deemed to be his attitude of mind and his morality which brought him so close to Germany's own great men. The list that Großhans compiled was impressive. He stressed Rolland's love of freedom and independence, his stubborn conviction in the justice of his own beliefs, his emphasis on heroic stoicism, his idealism and closeness to nature, his reserve and dislike of rhetoric, his disciplined and uncompromising personality:

Beim Vergleich mit einigen unserer großen Deutschen, denen Rolland besonders nahe steht, haben wir festgestellt, daß er dieselben Eigenschaften verkörpert wie sie, und zwar in einem Grade, der jeden Zweifel ausschließt: Selbstbewußtsein, Stolz, Unabhängigkeitssinn, Unbeugsamkeit, Trotz, Kampfgeist, heldischen Sinn, Freiheitsliebe, Verantwortungsbewußtsein, Gerechtigkeitssinn, Reinheit der Gesinnung, Innerlichkeit, Idealismus, Liebe zur Einsamkeit und zur Natur, Abstandsgefühl, Zurückhaltung, Grundsätzlichkeit, Strenge und Unerbittlichkeit des Denkens, Ablehnung jeglichen Feilschens und aller Schönrederei.¹⁶

Many of the very qualities fostered by Rolland in his writing and in his life, supposedly formed the ideological foundation of the Thousand Year Reich and of the war it was to rage against the world, in particular pride, stubbornness of purpose and an unrelenting fighting spirit. Rolland's characters were people of stature: "Bewunderung zollt er nur Menschen von wahrhafter Seelengröße, den Harten, Unbeugsamen und Glaubensstarken, den Herrenmenschen, die ihren Weg gehen, ohne nach rechts und links zu sehen, die ein Schicksal wollen."¹⁷ Großhans would have had no trouble convincing the ideologues of the *Reich* of the didactic value of such an author.

He did have considerable problems, however, when it came to explaining how a man of such laudable integrity could become a Bolshevik sympathiser and enemy of Germany's new leadership. Rolland had once again stated his intractable opposition to Hitler's Germany in a letter to Großhans which the critic reprinted in full in the preface to his thesis. The reason for Rolland's lack of support was to be found in that very Germanic quality of exaggerated idealism. He lived an inner reality, a realm of vision and dream, which precluded an understanding of the outside world. Indeed, Rolland's political confusion and eccentricity were in themselves very German: "Die Gefahr, daß der Idealismus, dieser edelste Ausdruck der germanischen Geisteshaltung, bis zur Verstiegtheit und Verworrenheit ausarte, ist bei uns Deutschen häufig in Erscheinung getreten."¹⁸ Rolland's beliefs were dangerously wrong but understandable. In any event his imperious individualism guaranteed him a freedom to which the common man had no claim. The great individual, the *Herrenmensch* had a right to live by a morality of his own making and that was where Großhans identified a philosophical closeness between Rolland and Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche and Rolland allegedly shared a belief in suffering as a source of moral inspiration and an understanding of struggle as the principle which underpins all life on earth.¹⁹

Leaving to one side any reservations expressed by Karl Großhans about Rolland's politics, the dominant mood of the study was, nevertheless, one of considerable admiration and respect. He was felt to have proved his

closeness to the Germanic spirit through his understanding of Germany's great artists, Beethoven in particular. This understanding was not simply a *Wahlverwandschaft*, however, it was proof of shared lineage. It was now up to Rolland to recognise his Germanic inheritance. That this recognition would be accompanied by an acceptance of National Socialism goes without saying:

So stellt sich uns Rolland im ganzen gesehen als ein Germane dar. Wohl zerren verschiedene Kräfte und Spannungen an ihm und lassen seine Seele unruhig schwanken; um so mehr sollte er aber deshalb, wie wir alle, der Stimme des Blutes lauschen, treu sein dem Gesetz seiner wahren Art und den Mißklang in seinem Innern zu erkennen und zu überwinden suchen - nach der Forderung des Hellenen Pindaros: "Werde, der du bist!"²⁰

Rolland did not, however, heed the call of his blood, indeed he became an ever more ardent opponent of Germany's despotic regime. One recognises the strength of desire on the part of this critic for Romain Rolland to join the fold. Whilst the Frenchman's politics made him undesirable, he seemed to embody so many of the qualities the National Socialists sought to cultivate. This was a dilemma that was never resolved.

Rudolf Strauch had come to similar conclusions to Großhans in the *Neuphilologische Monatsschrift* in 1934 in an article entitled "Sollen wir noch Romain Rolland lesen?" Strauch argued for a retention of *Jean-Christophe* on the syllabus of the *Oberprima*. In spite of his very real concerns regarding Rolland's 'pan-European Bolshevism', Strauch's essential respect for the man and for *Jean-Christophe* was irrepressible: "Wir dürfen unsern Schülern nicht verschweigen, wieviel Liebe zu Deutschland im *Jean-Christophe* und in Rollands Schriften über Beethoven und Goethe verborgen ist."²¹ He recommended the school reader published by Velhagen & Klasing with its extracts from the novel including the episodes "Peter Schulz"; "La meilleure France"; "Dans la maison". These passages would need to be read critically, however, under the direction of a teacher who could point out their ideological inadequacies. Peter Schulz was recognised by Strauch as a

representative of the romantic dreamer with whom Germany had first been identified by Madame de Stäel. The portrait of the true German hero was notably absent, however, the "heroische, kämpfende Mensch."²² Indeed, Rolland could not have hoped to portray him, not even in Jean-Christophe, since heroism was the exclusive domain of the Northern races: "Aber auch der Schüler wird unschwer erkennen können, daß die Lebenstapferkeit Jean-Christophes sich nicht mit dem Begriff Heroismus deckt, den wir als Wesenseigentümlichkeit nordischer Rasse in Anspruch nehmen."²³

The extracts entitled "La meilleure France" meanwhile offered interesting racial perspectives, "Ansatzpunkte zu fruchtbarer rassebiologischer Betrachtung."²⁴ Strauch greeted Rolland's denunciation of the corruption of French society at the turn-of-the-century, making of it an outright attack upon the power and influence of the Jewish intelligentsia. It exposed, he wrote, "die fortschreitende Vorherrschaft der rassisch Minderwertigen, einer verjudeten und vernichteten Lebewelt."²⁵ The consequences of this decadence would not be overcome, as Rolland had suggested, by an eventual victory of those healthy and morally sound elements of French society, however. France's downfall was irreversible thanks to this racial disintegration: "Es handelt sich hier [...] um einen rassischen Zersetzungsprozeß von gefährlichen Ausmaßen."²⁶ *Jean-Christophe* was therefore a useful tool with which to demonstrate to young Germans the dangers of allowing free rein to the racially impure.

The question of the portrait of the Jewish intelligentsia was one which was considered by Jewish critics before 1933. The Karlsbad Rabbi Dr J Ziegler had published a collection of extracts from *Jean-Christophe* which offered opinions on the Jewish people in 1918. Although he did not entirely approve of Rolland's treatment of all the Jewish characters, Ziegler broadly thanked Rolland for approaching the matter with a great deal of sympathy and understanding. He particularly approved of Rolland's exhortation to the Jewish intelligentsia to spurn assimilation and remain true to the spirit of Judaism: "Wenn wir schon eine Mission haben sollen unter den Völkern, in deren Mitte wir leben, dann ist sie nur: *uns selber treu zu bleiben*."²⁷

Rolland himself accepted that the image of the Jew was on occasion compromised in *Jean-Christophe* and regretted that, given the impact of the novel, he had not dealt with the question with more objectivity. In a letter of 6 August 1918, Rolland informed Ziegler that all the social portraits were seen through the often immoderate eyes of his hero.:

Qu'une partie de mes jugements sur les juifs vous semblent vrais et utiles, me fait plaisir. Quant aux critiques que vous m'adressez, j'y souscris, elles sont justes. Il me faut presque regretter que mon *Jean-Christophe* est pris dans l'opinion du monde une place aussi importante. Si je l'avais prévu, en l'écrivant, j'eusse complété certains jugements.²⁸

Stefan Zweig meanwhile had no objections to the portrait of Jews in the novel, indeed he congratulated Rolland on recognising a potentially destructive force in their intelligence: "Er sieht wohl, daß sie kein produktives Element im höchsten Sinne für die europäische Kultur bedeuten, daß ihr tiefstes Wesen Analyse und Zersetzung ist."²⁹ He had achieved an understanding of the deep sense of alienation experienced by the Jew, including a tragic alienation from self. "Der freie Weltbürger versteht wiederum ihre letzte Tragik, das Losgelöstsein von allem, selbst von sich selbst."³⁰ One senses Zweig's own deep sense of anguish here. Once again it is surprising to note the sheer breadth of *Jean-Christophe's* appeal: in this case to Jew and anti-Semite alike.

In Nazi Germany there was a reversal of the critical trend which emerged in the Weimar Republic. At that time Rolland was appreciated in the main for the political role he had assumed during and shortly after the Great War; his creative writings being of secondary concern. It was now primarily his work which was felt to merit attention; indeed his politics alone would have instantly made him *persona non grata* to the National Socialist regime and its scholarly apologists. *Jean-Christophe* contained enough ambiguities to make it useful as an ideological tool to illustrate the decadence of France and the corruptive influence of the Jews, whilst also celebrating Germanic vitalism. The message of the novel, however, was too closely allied to the notions of

individual freedom and responsibility to make it acceptable to the ruling ideology. Romain Rolland eventually disappeared from critical view within Germany. In a society in which political dogma reigned supreme, there was no room for anyone who fell short of its dictates.

Even as Nazi Germany suppressed the name of Romain Rolland, there was another Germany to which he could and did turn. In his letter to the *Kölnische Zeitung* of May 1933, Rolland had again addressed himself to what he termed "la vraie Allemagne". He looked to the opponents of Nazism to keep alive the spirit of the true Germany, and even as he was formulating his open letter, the adversaries of the regime were gathering abroad to organise their opposition. It was in the columns of the German exile press that Rolland's name lived on. It was once again the political commentator Romain Rolland who towered above his work. In such difficult and confusing times it is perhaps not surprising that literature had to bow to politics and Rolland's creative writing made little impact in the journals of the exiled German intelligentsia. His opinion on contemporary events, however, remained of great interest. Indeed Rolland was celebrated as one of the most important figures in the international anti-fascist movement.

From Moscow to Montevideo, his name became synonymous with the struggle against Europe's fascist dictators. Articles by him and about him appeared in over fifty journals and newspapers of the German resistance in exile.³¹ His opinion was sought at critical moments, his support solicited in many of the battles against the countless violations of human rights in Germany. His first real task after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 was to defend those accused of the arson attack on the *Reichstag*. In order to secure the release of Dimitrov, Torgler, Popov and Tanev, he became a leading member of the International Committee of Enquiry into the Destruction of the *Reichstag*. His numerous appeals for their freedom found echoes throughout the exiled German community. His support was gratefully received by the German intelligentsia to whom he also gave practical support. In May 1934, together with H.G. Wells, Bertrand Russell and many others he helped to

establish a library, the *Deutsche Freiheitsbibliothek* in Paris, designed to house a collection of all those books burned by the Nazis.

Most importantly, however, he lent his own name unreservedly to their cause. He donated sums of money to the anti-fascist cause, including the *Zentralkomitee der Antifaschistischen Arbeiter Vereinigung Europas*. The Left could count upon him to express his solidarity with so many of their *causes célèbres* of the 1930's. He was an honorary president of the *Kongress gegen Hitler* in Paris 1933 and once again in 1936 when his rallying cry was heard at the Congress of Brussels against War and Fascism; his passionate support for the amnesty of all political prisoners included the nomination of the persecuted Carl von Ossietzky for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1934. He tirelessly appealed for those political prisoners condemned to death by the Nazi regime including Adolf Rembte, Robert Stamm and Max Maddalena; he warned of the dangers of allowing Germany to re-arm, of the re-occupation of the Rhineland, believing in the necessity to halt Hitler militarily and last but not least he passionately believed in the necessity to support the Soviet Union. Rolland's calls to action were recorded with great enthusiasm in various publications, from Bertolt Brecht's *Das Wort* to Klaus Mann's *Die Sammlung*.

For those who may have found his treatment of the Jews ambiguous in *Jean-Christophe*, Rolland gave a number of full-blooded condemnations of their persecution. In January 1939 he wrote to the president of the "Union de la culture juive" and the letter was reproduced in the *Pariser Tageszeitung*. His words were prophetic. No enemy of Germany, he said, could ever have brought such disgrace and shame to the nation than the Nazis themselves in their persecution of the Jewish race. It was a crime which time would not easily erase:

Kein Feind Deutschlands hätte ihm so unermesslichen Schimpf und Schaden zufügen können, wie diese elenden Maniaken des Rassismus, die es in den Augen des Weltalls entehren. Die Ächtung des jüdischen Volkes zapft Deutschland das beste Blut seiner Intelligenz ab; die Feigheit, die Grausamkeit, die Niedrigkeit dieser Verfolgungen wird

ein Schandzeichen an seine Stirn heften, das nicht in Jahrhunderten wegzuwaschen sein wird.³²

In a widely reported greeting to the thirtieth anniversary of the *Schutzverband deutscher Schriftsteller* in November 1938, Rolland had spoken of his love for the true Germany, the Germany which would one day welcome home its exiles as heroes. It was, he wrote, these brave people who carried the future of the nation in their hearts. As the war ended, these were the words recalled in the Mexican-based *Freies Deutschland*:

Teure deutsche Freunde, Ihr müßtet aus Eurem Vaterland in die Verbannung gehen, um seine Seele zu retten. Ihr ruft mir in Erinnerung das berühmte Wort des Sertorius von unserem alten Corneille: "Rom ist nicht mehr in Rom - es ist überall, wo ich bin".

Wo Ihr seid ist das Deutschland, das wir lieben und ehren, sind seine edelsten und reinsten Überlieferungen, sein freier Geist, sein hohes Bewußtsein, seine tiefe Menschlichkeit, die königliche Welt seiner über die Horizonte hinausweisenden Gedanken. Eure Götter des Geistes, Goethe, Lessing, Kant und Beethoven sind mit Euch. Und Ihr tragt in Euch das Deutschland der Zukunft.³³

This struck many chords in the exiled community which in turn hailed him as a model upon which to build the foundations of a new and more humane society: "Er ist die leidenschaftlichste Verkörperung der Völkerharmonie, der Nächstenliebe, wodurch unsere unglückliche irrende Menschheit allein gerettet werden kann."³⁴

Yet it was not with an intellectual elite that Rolland was to pledge his troth as he had done in 1914. Rolland now found that his most natural political home lay with the international proletariat and thus the far left. It was with them that he made common cause. In March 1936, the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* published a letter from Rolland to the communist party leader, Ernst Thälmann, a prisoner of the Nazis since 1933. He wrote of his sympathy and support for the communist cause inside and outside the Soviet Union:

Der machtvollen, herrlichen Aufschwung der sozialistischen Gesellschaft in der Sowjet-Union, der großartige Sieg der Volksfront in Spanien, das rasche Erstarken der linken Bewegung in vielen Ländern beweisen nachdrücklich, daß die Zukunft den Ideen gehört, für die Sie, unser Kamerad Thälmann, kämpfen und leiden. Sie werden siegen.

Romain Rolland's anti-fascist credentials were to bring him credit in the post-war world. However, he has also been attacked on numerous occasions for failing to recognise the fascism afoot in Josef Stalin's Russia. His support for the Soviet Union was reiterated many times and there can be no doubt that he was duped into believing in Stalin as a force for good. In the summer of 1935, Rolland visited the Soviet Union with his Russian-born wife, Maria Pavlovna Kudascheva, and met Stalin. Their encounter was recorded for posterity in the Moscow-based German-language newspaper, the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, on 30 January 1936, Rolland's seventieth birthday. In the article, Rolland is pictured sitting, rather uncomfortably, with Stalin.³⁶ After the revelation of the depths of Stalin's crimes, it seems sadly incongruous to see Romain Rolland, a great champion of human freedom and dignity, sharing the same table as one of this century's most notorious dictators. However, those were days when Stalin was seen as the best bulwark against fascism, and as the only world leader who, in word at least, pledged deliverance for the persecuted and exploited classes. Rolland was certainly not alone in admiring Stalin, who succeeded in deceiving the European left-wing intelligentsia, among them some of the foremost writers of the day. François Fejtö later recorded that Stalin's public image was nothing short of paternal and serene up to the revelations of Nikita Khrushchev at the Twentieth Party Congress: "Stalin was the incarnation of the eternal truth of Marxism-Leninism, the dream of terrestrial salvation."³⁷

It was this image that Romain Rolland projected in September 1935 in an article for the Moscow *Internationale Literatur*. Stalin's name meant optimism, a faith in a better future for humanity: "Stalin und seine großen bolschewistischen Genossen atmen Optimismus - einen Optimismus sicherlich ohne Illusionen, aber ohne Furcht -, denn sie arbeiten für eine schönere, bessere leuchtende Zukunft der ganzen Menschheit."³⁸ Given what is now

known about the show trials of the 1930's, the words "ohne Furcht" must seem particularly misplaced. Rolland's recently published diaries of his visit to Russia in 1935 bear further testimony to the degree of his enthusiasm. His admiration for the Soviet Union was amply repaid by the enthusiasm and sympathy he awakened there. Rolland, the great *Weltbürger*, became Rolland the great *Weltarbeiter*. The *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung* counted him among its most valued collaborators: "Den 'Weltarbeiter' Romain Rolland ihren großen Bruder grüßen an seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag die Arbeiter der Welt mit Liebe und Achtung, mit Stolz und Freude. Wegbereiter einer hellen und glücklichen Zukunft."³⁹

Rolland was also a favoured writer in the USSR, enjoying a literary reputation which had not been forthcoming from his home country. On Monday 29 October 1934, one of Rolland's Weimar critics, Hans-Léo Götzfried, recorded a meeting with the author and his wife at the Villa Olga in Villeneuve, Switzerland. On that occasion, Rolland again spoke of the Soviet Union and Stalin with great affection. He recounted how difficult it was for him to find a platform for his political thought in Western Europe, contrasting this to the sympathy and understanding with which he was greeted in Russia. Indeed, even his creative writing was welcomed in Russia with a new enthusiasm. Götzfried recorded Rolland's faith in Stalin to accord the great individual the necessary freedom for his creative impulse. Proof of this Rolland saw in his own success there:

Die 'supériorité' geistig hochstehender Männer wird in Rußland stets anerkannt, und man beugt sich vor ihr. Voraussetzung ist nur, daß die Einzelpersönlichkeit für die Gemeinschaft Wertvolles schafft. Man gibt dem Individuum die denkbar größten Möglichkeiten der Entwicklung. Die 'exaltation de l'individu social' sei nirgendwo so groß, wie im Reiche Stalins. *Colas Beugnon* sei dort ein sehr populäres Buch, das neuerdings sogar verfilmt worden sei, ein Beweis, daß der Individualismus in Rußland keineswegs ausgestorben sei.⁴⁰

It would seem that this attention did flatter Romain Rolland to some degree. He must have felt that his own very personal brand of 'social art', which

demanded an inclusion of the social dimension within the expression of personal freedom, had finally been acknowledged. Did that make him blind to the practice of inhumanity in the name of humanity? One recent critic of Rolland's newly published *Voyage à Moscou* suggested unkindly that it was precisely this flattery which led, subconsciously, to his lack of insight into the true nature of Stalin's Russia: "Dans les divagations 'rollandiennes' des années 30, tenons compte aussi de la vanité d'un auteur qui se sait ou se croit reconnu en URSS et qui est disposé, sans trop s'en rendre compte, à payer le prix du ridicule et de la servilité."⁴¹

Romain Rolland belonged to a generation of writers and intellectuals who associated themselves unreservedly with Stalin's Russia, among them Céline, Louis Aragon and, of course, Henri Barbusse. There were those on the left, however, who were not duped by the avuncular tyrant. One of them was Wilhelm Herzog, supporter of the German Revolution and long-standing admirer of Rolland. After the show trials of 1936, Herzog wrote to Rolland, asking him if he too considered Bucharin, Rokovski, Rykov and Radek to be Gestapo agents, as Stalin claimed. When the answer came that these men had been justly condemned, Herzog severed all relations:

So endete die Freundschaft mit diesem von mir aufs höchste verehrten Menschen, der - ich weiß bis heute nicht, durch welche Umstände oder Einflüsse - zu einem so verhängnisvollen Irrtum gelangen konnte. Doppelt erstaunlich bei einem Manne seines kritischen Geistes, seiner Skepsis und seines Gerechtigkeitssinnes. Neben Heinrich Manns Wendung zum Stalinismus und auch seiner Bejahung der verbrecherischen Politik Stalins war Rollands unbegreifliche Haltung für mich in diesen Jahren der schwerste Schlag. Kein Wort ist fähig, den Schmerz auszudrücken, den ich angesichts dieser Verirrung empfand.⁴²

Given his life of commitment to supporting the freedom of all men, it is however difficult to doubt the Frenchman's *bonne foi*. It was the German-Soviet pact of non-aggression which was to deliver him so brutally from his illusions in 1939.

Rolland left behind many previous supporters from the liberal-left, among them Stefan Zweig, who were unable to follow him down the path which led to Stalin.⁴³ Rolland had changed camps, a fact which he forcefully proclaimed in an essay entitled "Adieu au passé" written at Easter 1931.⁴⁴ He declared that he had left behind him the bourgeois ideology into which he had been born, in order to embrace the cause of the people. It was this personal journey from bourgeois individualist to *compagnon de route* of the proletarian revolution which fired the imagination of the communist left in exile. It no doubt mirrored the path of many intellectuals on the left. When word came in 1943 that Rolland had been imprisoned by the Nazis and died in captivity, information based on unfounded rumours, it was in this vein that his obituaries were formulated. Willy Verkauf wrote in *Heute und Morgen* in April 1943, that Rolland showed the evolutionary path between the bourgeoisie and the working class and thus in Marxist terms the path between the past and the future:

Er ist eine der großen Fahrbahnen, die zwischen den zwei mächtigen Brückenköpfen der menschlichen Gesellschaft liegen - Bürgertum und Proletariat - Vergangenheit und Zukunft. [...] Den Weg zeigte Romain Rolland mit seinem eigenen Leben und Schaffen.⁴⁵

This was the image that was to guarantee Rolland continued critical attention among communist exiles. His life and work seemed to exemplify the logical and natural progression of bourgeois humanist to the new humanism of communism. Peter Merin again applauded this in *Das Wort*: "Gerade weil Rolland die Unantastbarkeit des Gewissens, die Integrität des Menschen verteidigte, mußte sein Weg zum Sozialismus führen. Denn mit dem Sozialismus beginnt die Geschichte der menschlichen Freiheit."⁴⁶ The course of the Eastern European socialism has since taught us to be cynical about the guarantee of personal freedom within communism. In the 1930's optimism still held sway and it was Rolland who reminded his readers that, if socialism was to fulfil its historical goal as a liberator of mankind, then the concepts of individualism and collective responsibility had to coexist:

D'une part, je maintiens l'espoir de bâtir une *Burg* de l'esprit international, sans frontières, sur les fondations de l'individualisme libre, lucide et intrépide. D'autre part, l'aiguille de la boussole marque le Nord, - le but vers lequel marchent les avant-gardes de l'Europe, les héroïques Revolutionnaires de l'URSS: - la reconstruction sociale et morale de l'humanité!⁴⁷

After 1945 the German-speaking world remained divided. Through the struggles against fascism of the 1930's, Rolland had won himself a place in the communist state that was to be established post-war, the German Democratic Republic. There was a bedrock of sympathy and understanding for a man who had fought his way from intellectual to revolutionary. His position in the Western state of the Federal Republic was, however, a more tenuous one. His humanism still spoke to many, but his art to all too few.

Little appeared in the columns of the exile press about Rolland as an artist. Bodo Uhse did, however, address the question of the relationship between Rolland and his work in *Freies Deutschland* in December 1943. Rolland, he said, was a rarity as a literary phenomenon. One was used to excusing the artist for his failings as a human being by reference to the greatness of his creations. With Romain Rolland, the opposite occurred, the author's personal charisma allegedly outstripped his work: "Ja, es scheint uns, als sei im Laufe der Jahre die Gestalt noch weit über das Werk hinausgewachsen. Romain Rolland hat den Jean Christophe überlebt. Er erreicht ein höheres Alter und eine tiefere Weisheit."⁴⁸ When considering the ideological messages of *Jean-Christophe*, Uhse admitted to an impatience with the novel for its endless debates about politics, literature, philosophy. The world had no time or inclination to indulge in such deliberations, he argued. The opinions expressed in the novel about women, the Jewish people, morality appeared outdated, provoking many an ironic smile if not, as happened on occasion, considerable irritation. Where then was its importance to be found, asked Uhse?:

Wir denken weiß Gott anders über die Frauen als der Jean

Christof, wir denken anders über die Juden und ihre Stellung unter den Völkern. Wenn es aber so ist, wenn es uns geschieht, daß wir hundertmal "Nein" sagen müssen, wenn es gar möglich ist, daß wir über manche allgemeine Lebensgrundsätze, die da aufgestellt werden, ironisch lächeln, wenn wir schließlich gar ärgerlich werden an manchen Stellen, wo der Moralist Rolland dem Schriftsteller höchst unglücklich ins Handwerk pfutscht: Ja, wenn all das so ist, worin dann liegt die Bedeutung des Jean Christof?⁴⁹

The greatness of the work had its foundation for Uhse in the greatness of the author. Through the novel one gained a measure of the man himself, in the most direct fashion, with all his contradictions, but also with all the freshness and naiveté of his generous heart. That experience was rare:

Wir finden sie in seiner - so paradox das klingt - in der Größe Romain Rollands. Wir finden sie in seiner Ehrlichkeit, von der nicht umsonst in dem Buche so viel die Rede ist. Wir finden sie in der Frische und Naivität des Herzens, die sich ja nur die ganz Großen zu bewahren wissen.⁵⁰

Notes

- 1 Uhse, Bodo: "Romain Rolland und die Deutschen." In: *Freies Deutschland*. Vol III, no 1, December 1943, p 27.
- 2 Reprinted in: *Quinze ans de combat*, pp 199 - 202.
- 3 Ibid, p 200.
- 4 Ibid, p LXXVII.
- 5 *Kölnische Zeitung*, no 25. Quoted in: *Unsere Zeit*. Vol VI, no 11, 15 July 1933.
- 6 *Quinze ans de combat*, p 205.
- 7 Binding, Rudolf G: *Antwort eines Deutschen an die Welt*. Rütten und Loening, Frankfurt am Main, 1933. (No page numbers given).
- 8 Binding, Rudolf G; Fabre-Luce, Robert; Kolbenheyer, E G; *Kölnische Zeitung, Die*; Scholz, Wilhelm von; Wirz, Otto: *Sechs Bekenntnisse zum neuen Deutschland*. Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, Hamburg 1933, p 9.
- 9 Ibid, p 13. Author's emphasis.
- 10 *Quinze ans de combat*, p LXXIX. The report by Charles Vildrac appeared in *Europe*, 15 August 1934.
- 11 Großhans, Hans Leo: *Romain Rolland und der germanische Geist*. Konrad Trilitsch, Würzburg 1937, p 3.
- 12 Ibid, p 1.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid, p 16.
- 15 Ibid, p 14.

- 16 Ibid, pp 78 - 79.
- 17 Ibid, p 62.
- 18 Ibid, p 39.
- 19 Ibid, p 77.
- 20 Ibid, p 79.
- 21 Strauch, Rudolf: "Sollen wir noch Romain Rolland lesen?" In: *Neuphilologische Monatsschrift*, Vol V, 1934, p 144.
- 22 Ibid, p 142.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid, p 143.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ziegler, J: *Romain Rolland im Jean-Christof über Juden und Judentum*. Beck und Sohn, Vienna 1918, p 62. Author's emphasis.
- 28 Ibid, pp 75 - 76.
- 29 Zweig, Stefan: *Der Mann und das Werk*, p 169.
- 30 Ibid, p 170.
- 31 See: Maas, Liselotte: *Handbuch der deutschen Exilpresse* (3 vols). Hanser, Munich 1976.
- 32 Rolland, Romain: "Die Schande der Henker. Ein Brief Romain Rollands." In: *Pariser Tageszeitung*. Vol IV, no 889, 10 January 1939, p 2.

- 33 Rolland, Romain: "Zum 30. Jubiläum des Schutzverbandes deutscher Schriftsteller, Paris, November 1938." In: *Freies Deutschland*. Vol IV, no 12, November/December 1945, p 4.
- 34 Anon: "Romain Rolland zum 70. Geburtstag." In: *Internationale Literatur*. Vol VI, no 1, January 1939, p 14.
- 35 Rolland, Romain: "Gruß an den großen deutschen Freiheitskämpfer." In: *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, Vol XV, no 12, 19 March 1936, p 192.
- 36 Anon: "Der 'Weltarbeiter'. Romain Rollands 70. Geburtstag." In: *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, Vol XV, no 5, 30 January 1936.
- 37 Fejtö, François: *A History of the People's Democracies*. Penguin, Harmondsworth 1977, p 10.
- 38 Rolland, Romain: "Aus Moskau zurückgekehrt." In: *Internationale Literatur*. Vol VI, no 1, September 1935, p 17.
- 39 See note 36 above.
- 40 Götzfried, Hans-Leo: *Romain Rolland und die Erneuerung des deutschen Geistes*. Diplax-Verlag, Erlangen 1946, p 181.
- 41 Le Roy Ladurie, Emmanuel: "Romain Rolland: un naïf à Moscou." In: *L'Express*. 12 June 1992, p 60.
- 42 Herzog, Wilhelm: *Menschen, denen ich begegnete*. Francke Verlag, Berne & Munich 1959 (chapter on Rolland pp 343 - 378), p 377.
- 43 See: Dumont, Robert: *Stefan Zweig et la France*. Didier, Paris 1967. Letter from Stefan Zweig to Friederike Zweig of 27 June 1937: "Ich werde mißtrauisch gegen mich selbst, seit ich sehe, daß die ältesten Freunde wie Roth, wie Rolland (wegen politischer Unstimmigkeit) sich entfremden." (p 130).
- 44 *Quinze ans de combat*, p 143: "Ah! ils ne s'en doutent guère, ceux qui, ayant perdu mes traces en 1914, pensent m'avoir rejoint, lorsqu'après

dix-sept ans ils arrivent enfin au point d'ou je suis parti, alors que j'écrivais, en septembre 1914, *Au-dessus de la mêlée!*"

45 Verkauf, Willy: "Romain Rolland, ein Erzieher unserer Zeit." In: *Heute und Morgen*. April 1943, p 4.

46 Merin, Peter: "Romain Rolland: Ein Leben in dieser Zeit." In: *Das Wort*. No 4, October 1936, p 55.

47 *Quinze ans de combat*, p 187.

48 Uhse, Bodo: "Romain Rolland und die Deutschen." In: *Freies Deutschland*. Vol III, no 1, December 1943, p 27.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

Chapter VIII

CONCLUSIONS

A literary text can only survive if it is the subject of discussion. Lack of critical debate will quickly consign a work and its author to obscurity. If not agreement, debate there certainly was about Romain Rolland and *Jean-Christophe* in Germany pre-1945. The plurality of approaches and diversity of interpretations of the novel is striking, with these divergent interpretations often being based upon the same textual content. In a work of over 2,000 pages, it was and remains possible to argue the case for and against a whole series of issues. Does the novel, for example, create a positive or negative image of Germany? During the First World War and Hitler's years in power, this question inevitably assumed a far greater importance than during the relatively peaceful years of the Weimar Republic. Are women, the Jewish people, the socialist movement sympathetically portrayed? Was Romain Rolland's fierce independence of spirit and concept of heroism Nietzschean or democratic? These were all issues that were hotly contended.

To attempt to give a definitive, objective response to any of these questions would be an impossible task, since the 'world' created in any literary work is open to an ongoing process of interpretation. As Rolland himself wrote: "Le roman ne commence, ni ne finit, pas plus que la vie. Il 'devient', selon la belle expression allemande; il est en perpétuel état de transformation."¹ The 'reality' of *Jean-Christophe* is thus quite clearly organised and experienced by the individual critic, himself the product of an age. The very diversity of response often demonstrated most clearly the manner in which Rolland's critics were responding to their own troubled world. Moreover, the novel was never understood by its author to constitute an 'answer' to the problems

of the real world. Its *forte* lay in the ability to prompt reflection and provoke debate. That it certainly did.

From this review of the reception of Romain Rolland and *Jean-Christophe* it is possible to see that the critical situation with German-speakers was a complex one. The success of the novel, which spoke to a broad and generally appreciative audience in Germany, shared a platform with Rolland's public *persona* as ardent opponent of hatred during the catastrophe of the First World War. As we have seen, however, it was often Rolland, the author, who played poor relation to Rolland, the spokesman for martyred humanity. The marriage of the political dimension of Rolland's life to his standing as an artist was to present German critics just as their French counterparts with a considerable problem. The image of Rolland, the great man but mediocre artist, was one never to be dispelled completely in either the French or German-speaking worlds. In that, we must disappoint Ives Jeanneret.²

Romain Rolland criticism post-1945 offers no less complex critical perspectives. The situation was complicated by the emergence of two separate German states, the now defunct German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. Romain Rolland's fate as an author in the German-speaking world varied according to which side of the Iron Curtain one looked. The Federal Republic of Germany, whilst it undoubtedly included some ardent admirers,³ largely neglected the work of the French author. He was remembered as the great advocate of peace in the blood bath of 1914, but his role as an author was considered minor. In 1973, Herbert Günther spoke of the difficulties of reviving an interest in Rolland's work in West Germany after the neglect of the Nazi years: "Deutschland schwieg Rolland tot. Seitdem ist Rolland in Deutschland nie mehr so gegenwärtig geworden wie er es bis dahin war. [...] Sein *oeuvre* ist bei uns nur in Bruchstücken bekannt."⁴ Günther ventured to suggest that the political and social goals which formed the battleground of Rolland's life had come to be regarded in the Federal Republic as self-evident truths which no longer required a moral champion. It was only upon closer inspection that Germans

in the West might realise how far they still were from realising Rolland's ideals:

Heute erklärt man, das alles zu wollen, wofür Rolland gegen eine Welt gestritten hat, doch bei uns ist von ihm so wenig die Rede wie noch nie zuvor. Vieles von dem, was Rolland gefordert hat, klingt heute wie eine Selbstverständlichkeit, und sieht man näher zu, so ist es ein Fernziel und keineswegs verwirklicht.⁵

The years of economic success had made the people of the Federal Republic complacent, Günther contended. This, coupled with the political and cultural hiatus of the Nazi years had made them easily susceptible to the belief that the passions of earlier generations had been superseded:

In der BRD ist es still um Rolland geworden - zu still. Um 1920 trafen Rollands Erregungen und Leidenschaft auf empfängliche Ohren; in unseren satten Jahren ist das weniger zu erwarten. [...] wir sind ein Volk der Traditionsbrüche - schnell bereit zu der Phrase: Die Zeit ist darüber hinweggegangen.⁶

Romain Rolland's critical reception assumed quite different dimensions in the Eastern state where he was regarded very much as a friend and spiritual father of the German Democratic Republic. Arnold Zweig even went so far as to declare that it was Rolland's name that should appear on the watermark of the constitution of the GDR as its 'patron saint', for he bore the same significance to that state as Francis of Assisi to Catholicism and Buddha to Hinduism. He formulated his thanks to Romain Rolland in a special edition of the journal *Europe* in 1965:

Nous avons créé un Etat Allemand d'où ne sortira aucune guerre, et nous écrivons en filigrane le nom de Romain Rolland dans la Constitution de notre République Démocratique Allemande. S'il y a un saint patron pour ceux qui ont consacré toute leur vie à la tâche de rapprocher les hommes, il porte pour chacun de nous le nom de Romain Rolland, de même que pour un bon catholique il s'appellerait François d'Assise et pour un bon Hindou Gautama Buddha.

The Romain Rolland of the GDR was, however, not the bourgeois individualist of *Au-dessus de la Mêlée*, but the author who had overcome the prejudices of his class to embrace, if not the reality, the ideals of communism. There the dominant image was of a figure who had shown the evolutionary path from bourgeois to socialist humanism. In his own person he demonstrated the need for constant self-renewal, in similar fashion to Lenin's exhortation for social renewal in the form of the permanent revolution. With his work, wrote Gerhard Schewe of the Humboldt University, "hat der Autor die Brücke geschlagen von seiner Welt des bürgerlichen Humanismus hinüber in unsere Welt des siegreichen Sozialismus."⁸ Rolland had succeeded in marrying his own very personal idealism with the founding principle of Marxism, that of constant transformation, claimed Werner Ilberg. The intellectual, the individual had learned to walk with the masses:

Er war und blieb der idealistischen Philosophie treu, aber den besten Begriff des Marxismus, den wesentlichsten, hatte er sich angeeignet: den des Werdens. Er war und wurde nie ein Kommunist, aber er war bereit für die Verteidigung der Sowjetunion sein Leben zu geben. Zum Schluß ging der Eine mit den Massen.⁹

This critic fails to acknowledge that the concept of *Werden* predates Marxism by many generations. It was, nevertheless, the manner in which Romain Rolland embraced the social role of the artist, the responsibility of the exceptional individual to make common cause with the masses, which was so heartily applauded in the GDR. His willingness to admit certain moral boundaries within the process of creation undoubtedly fitted well with the prevailing view of the role of art in a communist society. Was it for this reason that the work of this French author was often more readily available on the shelves of state book stores than the latest works of some of the GDR's own contemporary writers?¹⁰

Socio-political criticism, as was prevalent in the GDR, seeks to highlight the historical context within which the artist works. It is an approach to literary criticism which rightly commands respect, for to tear a work from the context

of its creation undoubtedly deprives it of much of its life-blood. It should also be recognised, however, that a socio-historical reading of a text raises important questions of its own. As critics, we must acknowledge that our work is often as much about ourselves and our own concerns as it is about the subject under discussion. This is clearly highlighted by the present study. The search for socio-political messages often dominated Rolland criticism in Germany. When the thrust of a critical approach was underpinned by a specific political ideology then, in the crassest examples, the Nazi critic found the anti-Semite, the communist, the revolutionary. First World War France identified Romain Rolland the traitor, just as Germany discovered a friend. Historical perspectives also change. Rolland's condemnation of Wilhelmine Germany proved to some of his wartime critics that the French author had failed to comprehend post-Sedan Germany, whilst a number of German critics post-1918 acknowledged that this very condemnation demonstrated a true understanding of Germany's essential greatness. The image of Romain Rolland as a pacifist idealist, which dominated criticism in Weimar Germany, took little account of his commitment to combat the rise of Fascism in whatever form necessary, including the option of military force.

We note the historically limited relevance of our concerns and judgements. The novelist Milan Kundera pondered this matter in a recent article written for *The Guardian* in January 1994. He addressed himself in particular to the question of the importance of the national, geographical and social context of the novel, the investigation of which, he conceded, might lead to an interesting analysis of its role in the development of a people for example. This approach, Kundera believed however, ignored the essence of the novel which is to be found beyond geographical boundaries in the aesthetic and philosophical domain. Echoing Goethe's call for a *Weltliteratur*, he dismissed the desire of the critic to reduce a work to the material context of its production:

To examine a novel in its national context is useful in order to understand the role it has played in the history of a people. But that will not say a great deal if one wants to understand it as a work of art. For that the European context is absolutely necessary: it is this which

will tell us not what a novel has brought to a particular people but what it has brought to the art of the novel, what unexplored aspects of existence it has managed to illuminate, what new forms it has discovered. That is the sense of Goethe's idea: only the supranational context can reveal the value of a work.¹¹

The 'supranational context' of a work is one which the critic must seek to establish, although he will never achieve this in any absolute fashion. Equally, the 'supratemporal dimension' must be permitted to maintain a vital place within literary criticism. A work must continue to speak to succeeding generations in the most intimate of fashions if it is not to be banished like an ancient artefact to a museum of natural history, fascinating in its own right but dead. Interestingly, it was a GDR critic who stressed the way in which *Jean-Christophe* speaks to successive generations by evoking the very powerful image of an incorruptible individual in his struggle to realise his own humanity within an ever more humane society. Its appeal is both universal and eternal:

Denn was den inneren Gehalt des *Johann Christof* ausmacht, das Vorbild eines unbeugsamen, aufrechten Lebens, das Beispiel eines Menschen, der sich seiner Verantwortung vor der Menschheit bewußt ist, der unerschütterliche Glaube an eine mögliche Vervollkommnung und Vollendung der Humanität, wie er in der dichterisch freien Wiedergabe der Christophorus-Legende am Schluß des Werkes zum Ausdruck kommt, ist nicht an den Lauf der Zeiten gebunden, ist unverlierbarer Bestandteil unseres in Jahrhunderten angehäuften Schatzes menschlicher Erfahrungen und Werte.¹²

Notions of universal and permanent values necessarily appear naive and outdated in a world which has come to be dominated largely by socio-political thinking and philosophical relativism. No more outdated, however, that Romain Rolland's own belief in moral integrity appeared to the literary critical establishment of turn-of-the-century France. Rolland in his *Jean-Christophe* had attempted to demonstrate the futility of a sceptical intellectualism, paralysed by the contemplation of its own weakness and

inadequacy. Parodying Ernest Renan, Rolland poked fun at the inability of the French critic to use clear value judgements:

La paresse de l'esprit et la faiblesse du caractère y avaient trouvé leur compte. On ne disait plus d'oeuvre qu'elle était bonne ou mauvaise, vraie ou fausse, intelligente ou sotte. On disait: "Il se peut faire...Il n'y a pas d'impossibilité...Je n'en sais rien...Je m'en lave les mains."¹³

Romain Rolland saw the need for the writer and critic alike to recognise a moral imperative in spite of the intellectually overwhelming evidence of the philosophical sceptics. Universality and permanence of appeal are value judgements which the modern critic has rather scornfully abandoned. Yet, is it not the search for beauty, on the one hand, and a timeless, universal understanding of the nature of existence on the other, that which lies at the heart of artistic and intellectual pursuit?

Rolland's early critics in Germany asked many interesting questions about the national dimensions reflected in the novel, the importance of his portraits of France and Germany and his understanding of their political and cultural relationship. These matters faded with time, assuming a less 'real', a perhaps more anthropological character. It was the critics of the Weimar era, however, especially the scholars, who had the distance and the leisure to question the deeper meaning of Romain Rolland's creative writing and *Jean-Christophe* in particular. Most importantly, they began to achieve an understanding of the author which penetrated beyond national and temporal boundaries, achieving an understanding of Rolland's place not only within French, but world literary and philosophical tradition. They asked not: "What does this work mean to me as a German-speaker?", but "What does this work mean to be as a human being?" In this, they acknowledged the demands of Rolland's humanism in a recognition of the individuality of every human existence, irrespective of race or creed.

Rolland's critics of the Weimar era traced his philosophical influences to Empedocles and Spinoza; his literary inspiration to one of the great protagonists of the European novel, Tolstoy. Interestingly, the influence of

Goethe, although addressed by some critics, remains to be investigated in depth.¹⁴ Above all, however, they recognised that one of the most essential qualities of his work lay in the spiritual domain. He presented them an intuitive understanding of life as a process of perpetual transformation, of *becoming* in the Goethean sense. E. R. Curtius recognised in Rolland's work this intensely passionate statement of faith in life as his great contribution to literature:

*Sein Schaffen ist Lebenstrieb, der sich weiterpflanzen will. Leben als Drang, als Flamme, als ewiges Werden, als Energieform, die hindurchgeht und sich hindurchrettet durch unzählige Tode und Auferstehungen, das ist die metaphysische Grunderfahrung Romain Rollands. Seine Bücher, seine Briefe, seine Botschaften und seine Freundschaften haben diesen gemeinsamen Ursprung. Sie wollen Leben erwecken in anderen Seelen, wollen Leben ablösen von ihrem Schöpfer. Es ist zeugende und zerstörende, ewig sich wandelnde Kraft.*¹⁵

The message was an emotional, not an intellectual one. It was also so intensely personal that Curtius pleaded, in an article in January 1926, for a new form of criticism which would view Romain Rolland and his work not as distinct entities but as one. Rolland's creative writing, Curtius argued, was not an independent construct which could stand on its own merit, but depended upon his personality to give it life:

Bei Rolland aber steht es so, daß alle seine Äußerungen ihren letzten Wert von seinem persönlichen Wesen her empfangen. Sie als abgelöste, in sich ruhende Leistungen zu beurteilen, heißt ihnen - oder ihm - unrecht tun. Sie sind nicht Gebilde, sondern *Botschaften*.¹⁶

It was this paradox that Bodo Uhse referred to in 1943: the quality of Rolland's work was inspired by the greatness of his personality.¹⁷ Negative criticism on aesthetic grounds was very simple. That was proved time and time again by French and German critics alike who seemed to agree that beauty of form was only ever accomplished in Rolland's writing in short bursts. Indeed it was, Curtius believed, precisely those works which strove

for purity of form which betrayed the gravest artistic flaws. What Rolland offered his readership was not to be found in the purely aesthetic domain. It was to be found in a metaphysical understanding of the wholeness and integrity of life. The roots of his *Credo* spanned Empedocles, Spinoza, the German Romantics and Goethe, the great Indian mystics. It was perhaps the echoes of the immanent divine principle which struck so many chords with a German readership. Rolland proffered a dual understanding of life, however. He was able to convince his reader of the necessity to partake in the worldly struggle and at the same time to ponder spiritual existence. Critics have long fought for the dominance of their concept of Romain Rolland, individualist, humanist, communist sympathiser, mystic and have sought to find those elements in his vast work and his life which underlined the correctness of their perspective. Rolland defies the exclusive tag as few before or after him.

This new criticism demanded by Curtius was in evidence in Weimar Germany to some degree. It was particularly prevalent in the publications of academic circles as is apparent in Chapter V of the present study. However, Rolland's political stature all too often overshadowed his literary presence and it was largely his name rather than the merit of a particular work that secured him a broad audience after 1918 in German-speaking world. The legendary stature that Rolland had acquired during the First World War became a calling card which guaranteed him admittance to the German publishing house and stage. One of the few modern French authors welcome in Weimar Germany, staging one of his dramas or publishing one of his works was in itself a political act, an act of reconciliation in the cold war between France and Germany, or as one critic put it in 1928 "eine der schönsten Taten, die dem deutschen Theater im Dienste der Verständigungsförderung zwischen Frankreich und Deutschland zurzeit vergönnt ist."¹⁸

The placing of the man before the artist was a trend which was to dominate Rolland criticism throughout the Weimar Republic and beyond. It is essentially through his reputation as a man, that most readers are still led to a desire to know his work. The more common route in literary appreciation is

inverted: the artefact has primacy over its creator and, more often than not, the reader is prompted to discover the human face behind the literary mask. One could argue that it is an irrelevance whether one encounters first the man or the artist. Is it, however, still irrelevant if one fails to progress from an acquaintance with the man to a knowledge of his work? When this process of discovery is disturbed, as is so very common in the case of Rolland, it is the writer who falls by the wayside.

One wonders whether Rolland himself would have been content to see his name outshine his work. He has Jean-Christophe ask himself this very question on his death-bed:

Que préférerais-tu? Ou que le souvenir de Christophe, da sa personne de son nom s'éternisât et que son oeuvre disparût? Ou que son oeuvre durât et qu'il ne restât aucune trace de ta personne et de ton nom?¹⁹

Christophe replied without hesitation that his art should outlive his name: "Que je disparaisse, et que mon oeuvre dure. J'y gagne doublement: car il ne restera de moi que le plus vrai, le seul vrai."²⁰ That Curtius, Uhse and others also maintained was the true value of Rolland's work, a magnificent mirror of the integrity and honesty of his own life. It is that which falls so tragically by the wayside when Rolland is remembered solely as a pacifist spokesman. In true Rolland fashion, however, the debate is not left there in *Jean-Christophe*. Is it not, Rolland has Jean-Christophe ponder, merely human vanity to desire eternity? Ultimately, both the reputation of an artist and his art are transient:

L'art est l'ombre de l'homme, jetée sur la nature. Qu'ils disparaissent ensemble, lampés par le soleil. Ils m'empêchent de le voir...L'immense trésor da la nature passe à travers nos doigts. L'intelligence humaine veut prendre l'eau qui coule, dans les mailles d'un filet.²¹

Notes

- 1 Rolland, Romain: *Mémoires*. Editions Albin Michel, Paris 1956, p 178.
- 2 See Introduction, p 8. Ives Jeanneret had asked whether Romain Rolland was better understood outside France.
- 3 Here one can point for example to the establishment of the *Gesellschaft der Freunde Romain Rollands* in 1951.
- 4 Günther, Herbert: *Das unzerstörbare Erbe. Rolland - ein Vorkämpfer Europas*. Gesellschaft der Bibliographien, Frankfurt am Main 1973, p 146.
- 5 Ibid, p 152.
- 6 Ibid, p 151.
- 7 Zweig, Arnold: "Remerciement à Romain Rolland." In: *Europe*. Vol XLIII, no 439 - 440, November - December 1965, p 209. Translated from the German by Jacques Verger.
- 8 Schewe, Gerhard: "Romain Rollands *Ame enchantée* und die Verantwortung des Schriftstellers in der Gesellschaft." In: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin*. Vol XII, no 6, 1963.
- 9 Ilberg, Werner: *Der schwere Weg. Leben und Werk Romain Rollands*. Petermänken-Verlag, Schwerin 1953, p 230.
- 10 When I was undertaking research for this dissertation in East Berlin in 1988, it was brought to my attention on several occasions that Rolland was a favoured author in the state bookshops.
- 11 Kundera, Milan: "Wisdom of Being." In: *The Guardian*, 27 January 1994.
- 12 Schewe, Gerhard: "Nachwort." In: Rolland, Romain: *Johann Christof*. Vol III, Rütten & Loening, Berlin 1965, p 670.

- 13 *Jean-Christophe*, Vol II, p 172.
- 14 One interesting, but short study was undertaken by: Aron, Albert W: "Romain Rolland and Goethe." In: *Monatshefte für den deutschen Unterricht*, vol XXX, March - April 1938, pp 98 - 109.
- 15 Curtius, E R: "Romain Rolland. Zu seinem 60. Geburtstag." In: *Hannoverscher Kurier*, 28 January 1926. Author's emphasis.
- 16 Ibid. Author's emphasis.
- 17 See Chapter VII, note 48.
- 18 Maltzahn, Hans Adalbert V: "Ein neues Bühnenwerk Romain Rollands." In: *Deutsch-französische Rundschau*, vol I, no 9, September 1928.
- 19 *Jean-Christophe*, Vol III, p 478.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.

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